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CHARLES S. GREEN 298560

✓ WELLS

American farm

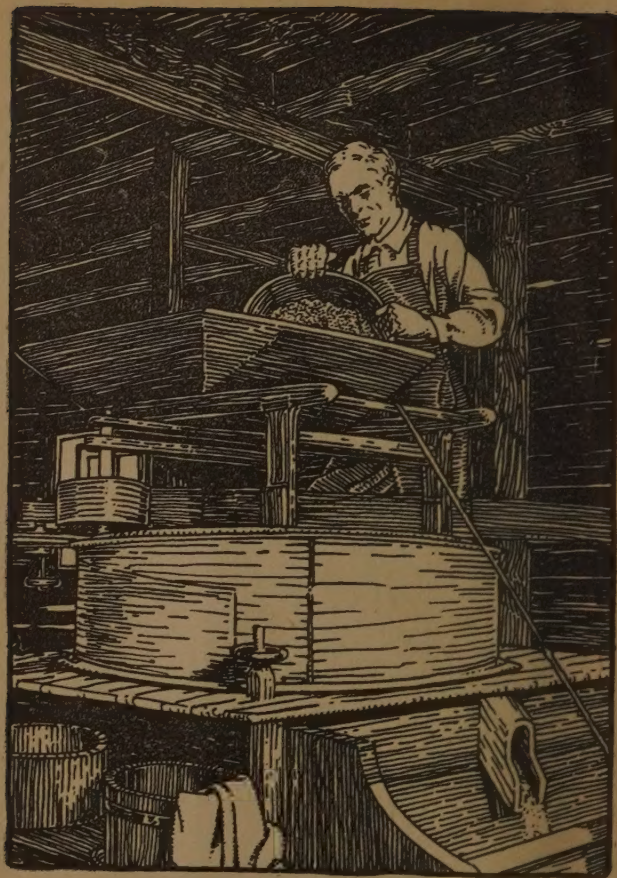
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THE MILLER POURED THE GRAIN INTO
THE HOPPER

AN
AMERICAN FARM

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY

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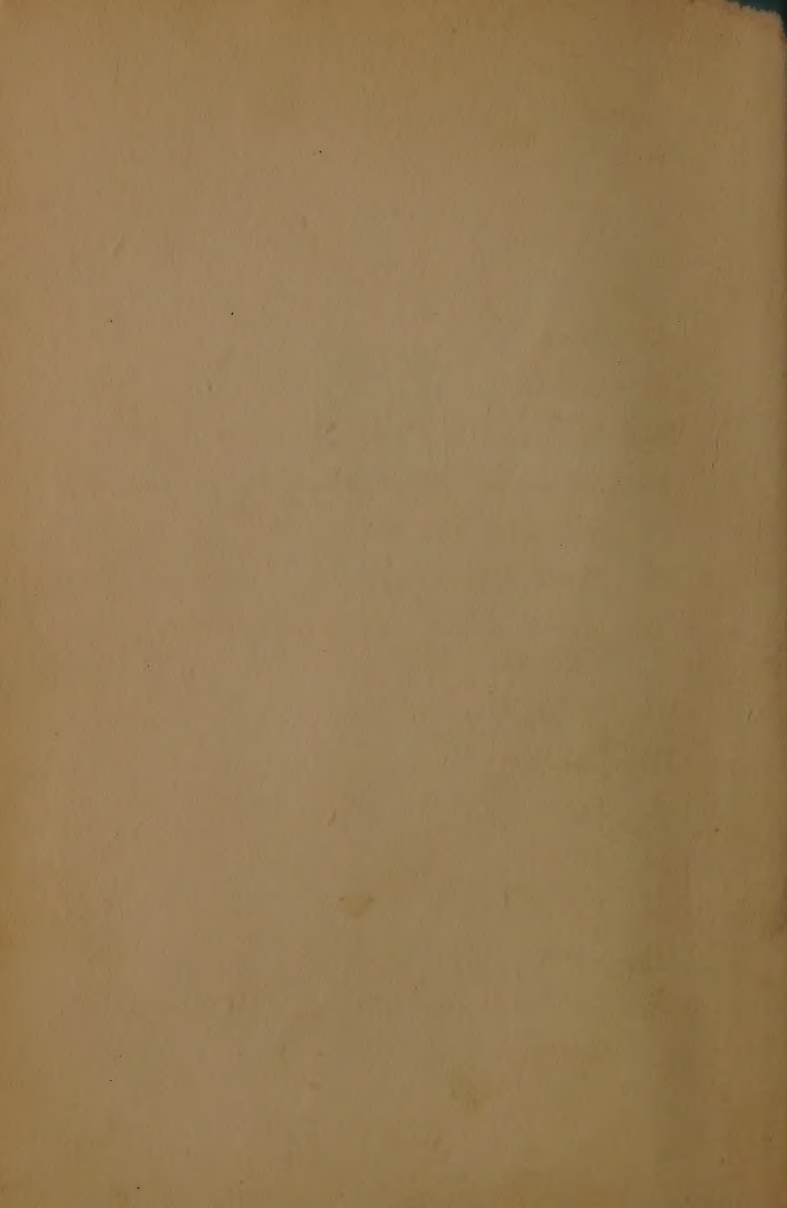
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FIRST EDITION



TO
MY MOTHER



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AN AMERICAN FARM







I

TOWN

DOWN the main street of a tired little town in East Tennessee an old negro drove a buckboard wagon. The wagon rattled over the stones of the street, the wheels avoiding the high stepping stones at the crossings. On the seat beside Uncle Jerry were two boys, David and Peter, who were respectively ten and twelve years old.

Uncle Jerry had been a body servant of David's and Peter's grandfather before the Civil War. After the war, when the slaves were freed, Uncle Jerry had continued to work for Grandfather Blair's family. Grandfather Blair was Mother's father. When the two boys came to

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live on the farm just at the edge of the little old town, Uncle Jerry had been hired by their father to come and do the gardening. Gardening was his job, but he found so many other things to do in the barn, the cellar, the chicken yard, the orchard, and the fields that he was busy from sunrise to sunset in summer. In winter he was up before it was light, going about with a lantern, and, in the evening, he was still doing chores around the barn long after the chickens had gone to roost for the night and the stars had begun to wink in the clear, frosty air.

As the wagon went down the street, although it was still early morning, signs of life were everywhere to be seen. It was county court day and the farmers, from all over the county, were coming into town to have cases tried, sell a little produce, buy a few supplies, and "swap hosses." At either side of the street there was a red brick pavement with limestone blocks for the curbstones. From the schoolhouse down to the courthouse a row of old maples grew along one side of the street. These hard, or sugar, maples were the glory of the town. They had grown to an enormous size and, in the summer, they spread their branches wide over the sidewalk and shaded it from the heat of the sun. In the fall the leaves

TOWN

turned red and yellow, and, when the wind shook them down in showers, the pavements were carpeted with bright color. When the leaves were on the ground, the boys and girls, as they went to and from school, shuffled their feet along the pavement to hear the leaves rustle.



At the top of the hill by the school, Uncle Jerry and the boys could look down the length of the main street with its houses and churches and see the courthouse tower rising in the middle of the town. A little way beyond the schoolhouse stood a neat little clapboard house, with a tidy box-wood hedge running from the front steps down to the sidewalk. The house, originally, had been built of logs, but later it had been clapboarded and a porch built on the front. It was in this house that the boys' Aunt Kate lived. As they drew nearer they saw her bending over a flower bed in the front yard.

"There's yer Aunt Kate," Jerry said.

Aunt Kate was Grandfather's sister and Uncle Jerry had known her since the day she had been

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born. She stood up from her stooping position and saw the boys. Jerry drew up by the curb as Aunt Kate came down the walk between the boxwood hedges, holding a bunch of bright colored nasturtiums, which she had been picking.



"Good morning," the boys called, as she came down the steps to the sidewalk.

"Good morning. What are you doing down town so early?"

"Charley lost a shoe and Uncle Jerry is taking him to the blacksmith shop to have one put on," David said.

"Mother needed some things," Peter explained, "and we're going to get them for her while Jerry has the new shoe made."

"We're goin' to get some things for ourselves, too," David said. "We each have a quarter to spend. I'm goin' to spend a dime for candy: some jaw breakers and cinnamon drops. Peter'll prob'ly get horehound and licorice babies 'cause he knows I don't like 'em."

"Well," said Peter indignantly, "*I* like 'em."

TOWN

"You had better trot along and get your things. It's court day and the town is full of country folks," Aunt Kate said. "Tell your mother to come and see me when she is down town."

"Good-bye, Aunt Kate," the boys said.

"Good mornin', Miss Kate," said Uncle Jerry as he picked up the reins. Jerry had never accustomed himself to saying "Mrs." to Aunt Kate after she married.

They drove down the street to the courthouse where they stopped again. The courthouse was a large, red brick building which stood in a square. At the front there was a flight of steps which led up to a porch with large columns rising to the roof. There was a tower on the courthouse which had a clock in it with a dial on each of its four sides. The most interesting thing about this clock was that no two dials could ever agree about the exact time of day.

The boys climbed out of the wagon. The Courthouse Square was full of horses and wagons and lean men, who were standing about, discussing crops and "hosses" with each other, in a slow drawl.

"Let's see what they've got to sell," David said.

They walked around and looked at the things in the wagons. There was not a great variety.

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There were melons, chickens, ducks, young pigs, cheese and butter, and some vegetables. Sitting on the seat of one wagon was a girl eating a banana. It was probably the first banana she had ever eaten. She had pulled the peel off one side of it and was eating it out of the rest of the skin like an ear of corn.

David stared at the girl and then began to laugh. She saw that he was laughing at her and turned quite red.

"How's it taste, Sissy?" David asked impudently.

She made a face at him and stuck out her tongue. "Mind yer own business," she snapped.

"Look out!" David retorted. "Your mouth might stay that way."

They wandered around among the wagons and horses. David saw a boy with a cigar box covered with wire netting. He walked up to the boy and asked, "What you got in your box?"

"White mice," the boy drawled.

"Want to sell 'em?"

"I dunno," the boy answered. After hesitating he added, "Maybe."

"Le'me see 'em. How much do you want for 'em?" David asked.

"What'll ye gimme?" the boy demanded.

TOWN

David thought for a moment then he said that he would give fifteen cents for the two mice. Ten cents had to be saved to buy candy.

"Ain't ye got nothin' else, nothin' ye could swap?" the boy inquired.

David reached into his pocket and took out a knife with one broken blade and an agate marble. "I'll give you these," he said, displaying his possessions.

"What's 'at?" the boy asked, picking up the agate and inspecting it. "Hit looks like a glassy."

"It's not a glassy," David protested. "It's an aggie. They cost a lot o' money."

"I reckon I don't want to swap," the boy said.

"All right," David replied, "only you'll be sorry if you don't."

He strolled away to meet Peter who had already crossed the street and gone into the grocery store. David wanted the mice and decided that he would have them. When he entered the store he found that Peter had given Mother's order to the groceryman and was buying some candy.



Inside the store there was an odor. It was a

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scent peculiar to country grocery stores, combining the odor of kerosene oil, molasses, apples, coffee, and several other things into a perfect blend. When the clerk had finished waiting on Peter he turned to David, "What'll ye have, son?" he inquired.

"Gimme a nickel's worth o' jawbreakers an' three cents' worth o' cinnamon drops, an' two penny sticks o' peppermint, the ones with red stripes."

While the man was putting the candy into a bag, David said, "That boy's goin' to let me have the white mice."

"Did he say he would?" Peter asked.

"No, not 'xac'ly," David answered. "But when I offer him a couple o' jawbreakers an' the knife an' the agate, he'll take 'em."

"Here's yer poke o' candy," the clerk said, handing the bag over the counter.

David paid him and left the store with Peter.

"I got to see that boy 'bout those mice," David announced.

"Go an' see him," Peter said, "I'm goin' to the blacksmith's shop and find Uncle Jerry. You can come there, too, or wait at the grocery store. Don't go gallivantin' all over creation."

David went in search of the boy with the



THE GROCERY STORE

TOWN

mice. He remembered that the mice had pink eyes. There might be something wrong with them. He would speak to the boy about their eyes. He hurried through the crowd around the courthouse until he saw the boy, then he walked more slowly.

As David sauntered up to the boy, he said, "Hullo!"

The boy answered, "Howdy!"

"Sold 'em yet?" David asked.

"Naw," the boy answered, scratching the edge of the box with his thumbnail.

"Their eyes are pink," David said. "Maybe they can't see."

"Sure, they kin see," the boy retorted. "They al'ays have pink eyes."

"I never saw a mouse 'ith pink eyes before," David persisted.

"Well, maybe ye never seen white mice before."

David took the knife and the agate out of his pocket. "I'll give you these for the mice."

The boy eyed the things in David's hand. "What've ye got in yer poke?" he asked.

"Jawbreakers," David answered. "I'll give you two jawbreakers, too."

"I reckon I don't want to swap," the boy said, hesitatingly.

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"Better take 'em," David urged. "You can't do better."

The boy hesitated, then said "All right," and handed David the box.

David gave him the knife, the agate, and the two jawbreakers.

"Here," said David, feeling that he had gotten the better of the bargain, "I'll give you some cinnamon drops, too."

David took the mice and hurried to the blacksmith's shop to meet Peter and Jerry. He waved the box at Peter, who was standing in front of the shop.

"I got 'em!" he shouted.

The blacksmith was paring Charley's hoof. When he had trimmed the hoof he smoothed it off with a rasp. While the blacksmith did this his helper blew the bellows to kindle the fire which had died down in the forge. David watched the helper as he pumped the bellows.

"Here," David said, thrusting the box at Peter, "hold this. I'm goin' to work that thing."

"What thing?" Peter asked.

"The bellows!"

"Let me work it," David said as he went over to the bellows.

TOWN

"Ye don't know how," the helper returned.

"What d'you have to know," David demanded. "All you have to do is work it up an' down." David took hold of the handle.

The smith came into the shop and, with a pair of tongs, removed a horseshoe from the fire.



"Havin' a good time, sonny?" the smith asked, as he laid the shoe on the anvil.

"Sure," David answered.

The smith cut the ends off the horseshoe and plunged it into a tub of cold water. Then he measured it against Charley's hoof. He put the shoe back into the forge. David pumped the bellows until the fire glowed white hot. The smith took the shoe from the fire and laid it on the anvil again. "Clang, clang, clang," went the hammer on the anvil as the smith bent and shaped the ends of the shoe. At every stroke of the hammer a shower of red-hot sparks spurted from the glowing iron. Once more he put the shoe into cold water to cool and temper it. Then he nailed it onto Charley's hoof. After the smith

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had finished nailing the shoe he let the hoof slide from his leather apron to the ground.

"That'll last him a spell," the smith said, patting Charley on the flank.

Uncle Jerry hitched Charley to the wagon and he and the two boys climbed in. Peter told Jerry to stop at the store for the things he had ordered. David saw the boy who had traded with him. As they drove by David grinned and the boy gave him a slight nod of recognition. One side of his face looked as though it had developed a terrible swelling.

"What did you buy?" David asked, turning to Peter.

"Some chocolate creams for Mother an' some horehound an' rock candy for myself."

"I'll trade you a jawbreaker an' some cinnamon drops for a piece o' your rock candy," David said.

"All right. Now, don't be stingy with the cinnamon drops."

"How many d'you expect?" David inquired.

"Half a penny's worth," Peter answered.

"Don't forget I'm givin' you a jawbreaker, too," David reminded him.

"I won't forget," Peter said, "but I was afraid you might."

TOWN

"Fat chance," David said. "Here's your candy. Gimme the rock candy."

All the way home they ate penny candies. David sucked a jawbreaker. Every little while he took it out of his mouth to see what color it was. It was made of layers of differently dyed sugar and he wanted to see the color of each layer. In the center of the jawbreaker there was an anise seed.

"Seems like ye air always eatin', Davy," Uncle Jerry remarked.

"Seems like I don't get half enough to eat," David said. "I'd like to have a garden full o' candy bushes an' cookie trees. Maybe I'd get enough, then."

"An' maybe you'd be sick like you were when you ate the green peaches," Peter said. "You made yourself sick on watermelon preserves, once, too."

"It's a pity you can't think o' somethin' pleasant on a nice day like this. You might spend part o' the day thinkin' up some names for my mice." After a moment he added, "I guess I'll call 'em Martha an' Lazarus."

"Lazarus is a fine name for a mouse. They certainly smell like somethin' dead. Mother'll be tickled to death with 'em," Peter said.

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At the end of the lane which led up to the barnyard Peter got down and opened the gate. Jerry drove through it and Peter closed the gate and locked it. Then he walked up to the house behind the wagon. In the barnyard David jumped out of the wagon and ran to the house to show Mother his mice.

"Land sakes, David, where *did* you get those things?" Mother asked as she looked into the box.

"Got 'em from a boy down town," David answered.

"You will have to keep them in the barn. We can't have mice in the house."

"All right," David said. "I'll make a cage for 'em. Look at their eyes, Mother. They have pink eyes. That's one o' the special things 'bout white mice."





II

W H E A T

A FEW weeks after David got his mice he and Peter made another trip to town with Uncle Jerry. This time they were taking wheat to the mill to be ground. Father had told Uncle Jerry to take some of the new wheat, that had been threshed a few weeks before, and was ready to be made into flour. They were going to the mill over by Mill Brook Spring on the other side of town.

Uncle Jerry drove through the town and, at the foot of Rocky Hill, turned to the right into Mill Brook road. When Uncle Jerry and the boys reached the mill, the miller was grinding wheat for a farmer from the country down near Boon's Creek. While they were waiting David

AN AMERICAN FARM

and Peter went out to look at the big wheel that turned the mill stones. Some distance above the mill were the dam and the pond. In the dam there was a gate which could be raised and lowered to regulate the height of the water in the pond. At the end of the race there was another gate that could be opened and closed. When it was open the water flowed over the mill wheel and kept it in motion as long as the grinding continued. To stop the mill the gate at the end of the race was closed and, instead of flowing over the wheel, the water flowed over the sides of the race. The race was built of boards and was about three feet wide and three feet deep. At the end near the pond dirt had been banked against the outside, but down near the mill it was built up on posts to keep it elevated above the wheel, which was about fourteen feet in diameter. The boys took special notice of the way all this had been built.

"When we get home we can make a water wheel," said David.

"Yes," Peter replied, "we can build a dam in the little branch that runs through the meadow in front of the house. This afternoon we can make the wheel and to-morrow we'll build the dam and the race and set the wheel in place."

WHEAT

The farmer from the country came out of the mill and put a sack of flour and a sack of bran under the seat in his wagon. When the boys saw the farmer come out they knew that the miller was ready to grind the wheat which Uncle Jerry had brought. As they went into the mill the miller was just pouring the wheat into the cleaning machine which removed all the particles of dust and dirt from the grain before it was to be ground. The machinery rattled and made so much noise that the boys could not hear the miller talk unless he raised his voice.



From the cleaning machine the wheat was carried up and poured into the hopper over the grinding stones. These were two large millstones which weighed about fifteen hundred pounds apiece. The lower stone was stationary and the upper stone revolved upon it. Both of the stones had grooves cut on the grinding surfaces. In the upper stone a cylindrical hole had been drilled through the center and the wheat, which was fed into the hopper, poured through the hole

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onto the grinding surface of the lower stone. At one side of this machine there was a spout through which the ground wheat was emptied into a bin. The miller explained that from here the flour was carried to the bolting machine on the floor above.

"If you will come upstairs," the miller said, "I will show you how the flour is bolted."

The boys followed him upstairs to the bolting machine and watched while he slipped a belt over a wheel to start the machine. As it began to rattle and whirr, the miller opened a panel in the other end so the boys could look inside the machine. There they saw a long cylinder made of strips of wood placed several inches apart and nailed to round pieces of wood. Through the center of these round pieces ran a long rod and on the outside of the strips was stretched a piece of silk cloth which formed the outside of the cylinder. The whole cylinder revolved on a rod which ran through the center. The boys could look through the cylinder as it turned and see the ground wheat pouring into the other end. As the cylinder turned, the flour, which was still mixed with the bran and skin of the wheat, was sifted through the silk and fell to the bottom of a long trough below the cylinder which had a revolving shaft

WHEAT

in it. This shaft carried the flour to the end of the trough where it was emptied into sacks.

The miller obligingly shouted explanations of each part of the process, how the bolting was necessary to separate the bran from the flour, how the fine flour sifted through the silk into the trough and the coarse bran was left in the cylinder. The boys' mother would use the flour to make bread but the bran would be fed to the young chickens and turkeys. This was the last process the wheat was put through before it was ready to use for baking.

The boys had watched the wheat from the time it had been planted until it was ground into flour. In the previous autumn the earth had been broken, harrowed, and dragged before the wheat could be sown. This was done early in November before the ground began to freeze. If there was a shower soon after the grain was in the ground green blades shot up a day or two after the rain had fallen. If it was very dry the wheat did not sprout until it had rained.

All winter long the field had been green and by the first part of March the grain was more than eight inches high. By the middle of April it was "in the boot," as the farmers would say, meaning it had begun to joint.

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In the early part of June when Boaz, the peacock, began to shed his gay tail feathers, the wheat was just beginning to yellow. In the third week of the same month it was ready to cut and Peter and David helped with the work in the field. That year Peter learned to reap with a cradled scythe. When his father told him that he might help to cut the wheat if he would learn to cut a good swath Peter began to practise and by the time the wheat was ripe he was able to do his share of the cutting.

David was not large enough to use the scythe but he also helped with the reaping. He followed the reapers, and gathered the cut wheat into bundles which were bound into sheaves by tying them with a twist made of a few stalks of wheat. As the sheaves were made they were dropped on the ground and left there until several had been finished, then they were stacked in shocks of ten sheaves with two sheaves laid over the top like a thatch roof to shed the water when it rained. The wheat was left standing until it was threshed. In dry weather wheat was ready to be threshed after it had been standing in the shock for a week or ten days.

On the day when threshing was to be done all other work was suspended. Only the necessary



REAPING WITH A CRADLED SCYTHE

WHEAT

chores, such as milking, feeding the animals, and splitting wood for the kitchen, were attended to. In the morning an engine and a threshing machine were brought to the farm and put in the wheat field. Barrels were brought, too, for hauling water. The wheels of the engine were braced with sticks of cordwood to keep the engine in place while it was running to supply power for the threshing machine. A belt was put on the fly-wheel of the engine and then passed over a wheel on the thresher. Six men came with the machine, so that with Uncle Jerry, the two boys, and a man whom the boys' father had working on the farm, there were ten threshing hands.



Uncle Jerry drove the wagon with the barrels in it down to the creek to get water. David and Peter went with him and helped bail up the water in pails. The boys stood in the creek. They handed the water up to Uncle Jerry who was in the wagon. When the barrels were about two-thirds full Uncle Jerry drove back to the engine.

The wheat had already been taken out of the

AN AMERICAN FARM

shocks and piled near the threshing machine. Before the wheat was put into the machine the sheaves were untied. As the wheat passed through the thresher the grain was taken out of the head. The chaff or husk, which encloses each separate grain, and the beard were blown or winnowed out of the grain by fans in the thresher. The straw was carried out of the machine at one end through a funnel and then piled into stacks. This straw was used for bedding the pigs and cattle during the winter. In the surrounding country and back in the mountains, instead of feathers, straw was used to fill bed ticks. Many children in the Blue Ridge, Smoky, and Cumberland mountains have never known any bed other than a straw tick on the floor of their cabin.

The grain poured out of the thresher in a stream of smooth, clean kernels. When one bag was filled it was set aside with the other bags and a new one was put in its place. David and Peter walked around and dipped up handfuls of the grain and looked at the well-developed kernels as they slid through their fingers back into the bags. If there had been a very late freeze that year or if it had been a dry season in the spring and early summer the grains would have been stunted, the skin on them would have been

WHEAT

thicker and the surface of the grains would have been rough and wrinkled. The skin on blighted wheat is much tougher and thicker than it is on full-grain wheat.

"Let's make chewing wax," said Peter.

"How do you make it?" asked David, surprised but interested.

"Well," answered Peter, "it isn't exactly wax. It is gluten, but Father says you can chew it."

"How can we do it?" David's interest was increasing.

"Father says you put a few grains of wheat in your mouth and chew them until all the bran and starch are out of the gluten."

"What's gluten?"

"It's the sticky part of the wheat. If flour doesn't have enough gluten it won't make good bread."

"Oh!" said David, but he didn't ask any more questions. Instead he popped a few grains of wheat, which he had taken from one of the full bags, into his mouth.

Peter also took a few grains and started to chew. Both the boys chewed the wheat until there seemed to be nothing left but gluten; then they took a few more grains and chewed them up with the first mouthful.

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"Good, isn't it?" said David.

"Yes," answered Peter.

David continued to chew more wheat until his mouth was so full of gluten that he could not take another grain.

While the threshing was going on in the field in the morning, Mother and the hired girl, whose name was Blanche, were busy in the kitchen preparing dinner for the threshing hands. A table had been set out on the back porch upon which the dinner was to be served. The boys had begged to be allowed to eat there, too, and places had been set for them.

The appetites of threshing hands were famous on farms throughout the country, and the boys had discussed this together at length. David had an idea that they would probably eat everything in sight and then want more. He said, "If Mother doesn't let us eat dinner with them we won't get a bit, not even a little, teeny bit."

When the boys got to the house they washed their faces and hands in a wash basin, which stood on a bench with a bucket of water, out-of-doors by the back steps, and dried them on a roller towel which hung on the porch. After they had dried their hands they left their sleeves rolled up and went into the kitchen to look at the dinner.

W H E A T

The oven door was open and they saw two pans with brown crust over them inside the oven.

"Cobbler," shouted David, "goody! Is it goin' to have hard sauce, too?"

"No," answered Blanche, "you'll git no hard sauce to-day. All the butter those threshers git is in the cobbler a'ready. It'll be served with a cinnamon an' milk sauce. That's good enough for 'em and I reckon you'll have to make out with it, too."

"Sounds good enough to me," said Peter. "What else is there?"

"Well, there's corn bread, as you kin see for yerself. Hit's settin' on the back o' the stove there to keep warm. An' then them two kettles is full o' the biggest mess o' corn an' green beans, pole beans, too, with a right smart o' fat meat boiled in hit, that you young 'uns ever saw, and there's buttered beets and new potatoes to go with it. Besides that there's sliced onions an' cucumbers in vinegar an' five gallons o' butter-milk for 'em to drink if they're thirsty. What they don't drink we kin feed to the hogs. Though I don't s'pose there'll be any left."

From this speech one might judge that Blanche did not care too much for the men who were coming to dinner.

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David started to say something, but the gluten which he was still chewing got in the way of his tongue and all he could do was to mumble.

Blanche gave him a look. "What've you got in yer mouth?" she asked. "You'll spoil yer dinner."

While she was saying this David opened his mouth and dropped a grayish lump of something into the palm of his hand. "It's chewin' wax. We both made some but Peter threw his away. I'm goin' to keep mine to chew after dinner. An'," he added, "it won't spoil my dinner."

"If yer goin' to keep it, git yerself a grapevine leaf and wrap the wax in it, then you kin put it in yer pocket."

A thin, shrill sound floated down from the field behind the orchard and came through the open door of the kitchen.

"There, now," Blanche exclaimed, "it's a'ready half-past eleven—that's the whistle. Those hungry hyenas'll be down here in a few minutes. You kin help me put things on the table. Davey, go and see if the table is set right an' Peter, you kin run out in the garden and cut some peach-tree branches for fly brushes. Here's a knife; don't leave it out there."

WHEAT

Just then Mother, who had heard the whistle, came into the kitchen. "I will look at the table, Blanche. David, you go to the spring house and bring up some of the buttermilk. Blanche, is everything ready for dinner?"

"Yes, 'um, I'm just goin' to dish up now."

Blanche took a perforated ladle and began to heap the corn and beans on two large platters. When the first pot was nearly empty Blanche leaned over and sniffed the steam which was rising from the pot. "That's mighty fine pot liquor," she said. "With some o' that an' plenty o' corn bread to put in it an' a glass o' cold buttermilk, I guess I can make out my dinner."

Mother smiled as Blanche said this because Blanche's fondness for pot liquor from corn and beans or boiled greens was well known.

David returned with the milk which was poured into two pitchers. A pitcher was placed at each end of the table where it could easily be reached by the men who would fill their own glasses.

As Blanche put a platter on the table she saw the men coming through the gate by the spring house into the yard. "Here they come, lookin' starved to death. I'll bet they're hollow down to their toes, every last one of them."

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The men came up to the porch and washed their hands at the wash bench. The water from the wash pan was emptied onto the grass. They dried their hands on the roller towel and then stood about anxiously eyeing the table.

Blanche came out of the kitchen with a steaming plate of corn and beans. "You might as well set right down an' git started," she said, "everything's on the table."

The men slid awkwardly into their chairs and, after giving them two or three hitches to bring them into the most comfortable position in relation to the table, they began to help themselves to the food which stood in front of them, and then passed it on to the next person. There was no display of false modesty. They helped themselves generously; the plates were filled to overflowing. Beets, potatoes, corn and beans, pieces of salt meat, and cucumbers with onions were piled beside and on top of each other. Large pieces of corn bread disappeared as if by magic, and knives and forks were used with equal dex-

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terity for cutting or conveying food. There was no conversation, but occasionally the business of eating was interrupted long enough for someone to say, "I'd thank ye fer the cucumbers," or "Them's mighty fine beets, I'd like to trouble ye fer 'em agin."

The food on the plates rapidly disappeared and was replaced by more food from the dishes and platters which Blanche continued to bring from the kitchen.

David and Peter had missed none of this marvelous display. For a boy of his age David had also shown remarkable ability in eating. But, although he was hungry, he did not let his dinner interfere with his observations.

At last this part of the dinner was finished and the cobbler with the cinnamon sauce was brought on. This also disappeared rapidly, and every one of the threshers accepted the offer of a second helping.

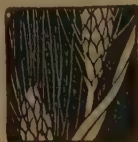
When all had finished eating they rose, one by one, from their seats and pushed their chairs back into place. Then they took their hats, which had been left on the grass, pulled them well over their eyes and, with an air of lazy satisfaction, their hands shoved deep into their pockets, crossed the backyard and the barnyard and

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went up the lane to the orchard behind which the threshing field lay. When they reached the orchard they sat down under a russet apple tree and spent the rest of the noon hour there. At half-past twelve the whistle blew again and the men roused themselves and went back to work.

David and Peter also returned to work in the afternoon. As they were passing the fence which separated the upper side of the orchard from the wheat field they saw Boaz, the peacock, who had had his tail feathers plucked a few weeks earlier, sneaking through the weeds and brush in the corner of the worm-rail fence. He always hid himself after his feathers had been taken from him until the new feathers began to show.

The wheat had to be kept in a well-ventilated place until it had sweat. The sweating took from ten to fifteen days, and after that the wheat was ready to be milled.



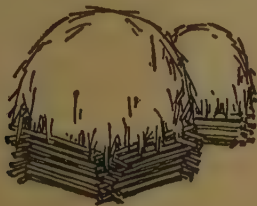
The boys remembered all these things now as they watched the grinding of the wheat. They felt that the wheat was partly theirs because they

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had helped with the planting, harvesting, and threshing and now were seeing how it was made into flour.

The miller had taken a half-peck of grain from each bushel of wheat which Jerry had brought. That was the share which belonged to him as payment for grinding the flour. The farmers always paid the miller an eighth of the grain which they sent to the mill instead of paying him in money.

The flour and bran or shorts were put into sacks and sewn up. The flour sacks were made of white cotton muslin while those for the bran were tow sacks. The boys helped to carry the sacks out to the wagon and Jerry placed them in the bottom of it on some straw, which kept them from getting dirty. Then they climbed into the seat, Uncle Jerry clucked to Charley, and they rattled over the road made of broken limestone, toward home.





III

FLUTTER MILLS AND A FURNACE

THE next morning David went to the garden to look at his popcorn. When he came back to the house Peter was gone but a boy named Charles, who lived across the road, was sitting on the edge of the back porch waiting for him.

"Hello, Davy, where ye been?"

"In the garden."

"What ye goin' to do now?"

"Go to the barn an' look for a square chunk o' wood in the work room. We're goin' to make a water mill. Come on," and they started for the barn.

The door to the tool room in the barn was open

FLUTTER MILLS

and Charles and David heard someone rattling things around inside. It was Peter who was also looking for some boards and blocks for the water wheel.

"Why ye goin' to make a water wheel?" asked Charles. "They're too much work. Why, ye won't get it done to-day. Flutter mills are a heap easier an' quicker, too."

"Well," answered Peter, "come to think of it a flutter mill *is* easier an' kind o' pretty, too. Reckon it'll be a flutter mill."



"If you make a flutter mill I can make one. Then we can have two mills." And David began to hunt around in a pile of scrap lumber under the work bench for pieces of wood.

In one corner of the tool room stood a number of spades, spading forks, shovels, and a post-hole digger. From the rafters overhead hoes, garden rakes, hay rakes, scythes, and sickles had been hung. The work bench had been built along the outside wall under the windows. On one end of it there was a wooden vise. On the wall between

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the windows were racks for augers, wood chisels, gimlets, a brace and bits, hammers, hatchets, and saws of different kinds; among them a mitre box, and hand and compass saws. On another wall there was a buck saw and a cross-cut saw with two handles for cutting cordwood.



David continued to rummage in the wood scraps piled under the bench. Peter had found a piece of three-by-three wood which he was going to use for the hub of his wheel. He put this in the vise and began to plane the corners off to make it octagonal instead of square. When he had planed the corners down so that the eight sides were equal he took some pieces of six-inch weatherboarding and sawed them the same length as the hub. The thin edges of the weatherboarding he attached to the hub with small brads, letting the other edges of the boards extend beyond the sides of the hub. It was all very simple until he got to the last board. This was more difficult, but by putting the wheel crosswise in the vise and using a small hammer to drive the brads in

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slantwise from the outside, he managed to attach this one, too. Peter then took two twenty-penny nails and drove them into the hub at each end. These were to act as an axis on which the wheel was to turn. He found two strips of one-by-two board and cut them in twenty-inch lengths. These he was going to use for stakes to support the wheel. In one end of each stake he cut a notch and the other end he sharpened to a point so that it could be driven into the ground. When this was finished he looked in a nail box until he found two good-sized wire staples.

"Mine's finished," Peter announced. "How's yours, Davy?"

"'Most finished. Can't find any staples."

"They're in the nail box," answered Peter, looking at David's wheel. "Shucks, your wheel won't hold together two minutes. I'll put some more brads in it."

"All right, go ahead," said David. He had found the staples and was cutting notches in the ends of his stakes.

"Come on, Davy. Charles, we'll go an' put them in the creek."

"Let's build a furnace," said Charles, "an' cook somethin'."

"That's a good idea. We can get some bricks

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for it around by the side o' the barn. Father said we might have 'em."

"Could you help me carry some?"

"I have to carry the hatchet an' my flutter mill but I can take three or four."

"An'," said David, "I'll take some, too."

They gathered up their wheels and stakes and bricks and started for the branch which ran through the meadow in front of the house. They went down the path under the maples and across the meadow until they came to the branch. Then they walked along the bank until they came to the two weeping willows. They decided to put the flutter mills in the stream just under the boughs of the big willow. It was also a good place to build the furnace as there was a bare, sandy spot on the far side of the branch.

The boys put the bricks on the ground. David and Peter set about placing their flutter mills in the stream and Charles went back to the barnyard to get more bricks.

Peter set up his mill first. He drove the stakes into the stream bed, sloping them out a little at the bottom. Then he drove a brad into the top of one stake across the notch. He slipped the nail at one end of the hub through this and then held the nail at the other end, in the notch at the

FLUTTER MILLS

top of the other stake, and drove the staple into the stake. The blades of the wheel were about one inch under water on the lower side, as the wheel turned. By the time the two wheels had been set up, Charles reappeared with another armful of bricks.

"Well," he said, "those are good flutter mills. An' say, don't they fly 'round?"

The three boys stood and watched the wheels for a while. Then Charles, who had thought of something he needed for the furnace, asked, "Where can we find a top an' a pipe for the furnace?"

"I know where there is a piece of tin roofing," said Peter. "We can use that for the top."

"There's a piece o' pipe in the barnyard," said David. "I think it's under the shed where the cultivator an' the hay rake are. It's kind o' bent but maybe we can use it."

"All right, Davy, you go an' get the top an' the pipe an' Charles an' I will get some clay to make mud." They were going to use the clay to chink the cracks between the bricks.

Peter and Charles took a board which they found on the ground by the fence, to carry the clay on. They went out into the road and walked along until they found a clay bank with nice,

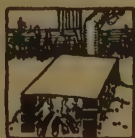
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moist clay on it. With their fingers they scratched up chunks of clay and put them on the board. They took much more than they could use but that was a wise precaution, as a large part of the clay rolled off on the way back to the creek. David had returned before them and he was busy pushing the stakes deeper into the water so as to lower his flutter mill and make it turn faster. This was necessary because he had put only four blades on his wheel and it did not turn fast when it was so high out of the water.

Peter and Charles put the board on the bank by the stream. They stood in the brook (they were both barefooted), and splashed water on the clay with their hands. When the clay was wet they kneaded it into a thick paste and then washed their hands in the stream. Next they began to dig a shallow trench for the furnace. At the sides of the trench they leveled the ground so the bricks would lie perfectly flat. The furnace was three bricks long and two and a half bricks wide. They used four layers of bricks for the height. When the first layer of bricks had been placed they put a thin layer (about half an inch) of clay on the top of them and on top of this they put another layer of bricks. Between these bricks they used some of the clay to stop the chinks and

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then covered them with another layer of clay. In the third layer of brick, at the back of the furnace, they left a space the width of half a brick for the smokestack. The pipe was just right to make a good flue. Peter took a forked branch from the willow tree and drove it into the ground to support the pipe and keep it in place. Charles daubed mud around the pipe where it fitted into the bricks. Last the boys piled sand against the sides and back of the furnace and put the top on.



"It's nearly time for dinner," Peter said. "We can go home an' eat an' then, if you can come back this afternoon, we'll build a fire an' cook somethin'. Mother will let us have a pan an' I can ask Blanche to give us somethin' to cook."

"I'll come back after dinner," Charles said. "Maybe I can bring some eggs. We could boil 'em in a tin can."

Charles went home. Peter and David went back to the barn to put the hatchet away and close the tool room. When they got to the house

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they went to their mother to ask permission to cook on the furnace.

"Mother! We've made two flutter mills an' built a furnace. May we cook on it this afternoon?" asked David in one breath.

"Yes," said Mother, "you may cook, but what are you going to make?"

"Well, Charles said he would bring some eggs," answered David.

"We thought that Blanche could give us something to cook," was Peter's reply.

"Go and ask Blanche if she has anything you can use," Mother said.

So they went to Blanche and asked her for something to cook on their furnace.

"Now ain't that like ye," exclaimed Blanche, "to come pesterin' me fer somethin' to cook when the whole place is full o' victuals. Why don't ye go an' git some roastin' ears and roast 'em in the embers?"

"You can roast corn in an open fire," answered Peter. "We've got a furnace built and we want to use it."

"Ye kin cook corn on the cob if ye're set on cookin' somethin'," said Blanche. "That's easy, an' ye can't go wrong."

"How do you cook it?" asked David.



THE FURNACE



FLUTTER MILLS

"Jest have a kettle o' boilin' water an' when it's boilin' good put the corn in an' let it cook eight minutes. If ye let it boil too long the corn'll git tough and lose its flavor."

"That's easy," said Peter. "May we take some butter to put on it?"

"Yes, ye kin have some butter. Take it out o' the yellow crock in the spring house."

After dinner the boys went to the garden and gathered the corn. On the way to the furnace they stopped at the spring house and got the butter which they wrapped in corn husks. Blanche gave them a kettle to cook the corn in.

Charles was waiting for them when they crossed the meadow. "I got 'em," he called as he held up three eggs in each hand.

Peter filled the kettle with water and put it on the furnace to heat. They all set to work to husk the corn and clean off the silk. After the corn had been washed they laid it on the grass until the water boiled.

Peter and Charles began to hunt for wood to stoke the furnace.

David said, "Looks like it never would boil."

"Well, if you'll help gather some wood it may boil quicker," was Peter's answer to this comment.

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David did not feel like gathering wood so he went to look at his flutter mill.

When the water was boiling Peter put the corn into the pot and Charles put his eggs in, too. In a few minutes the three boys were spreading the butter on the corn with their pocket knives. They let the eggs boil until they had each eaten three ears of corn, then they fished the eggs out with some forked twigs and dropped them into a can of cold water to cool them. When the eggs had cooled a little the boys shelled them and ate them.

The furnace stood the rest of the summer and all through the fall. With a few repairs to the clay it gave as good service as on the day it was built.





IV

APPLES AND APPLE WAGONS

FROM early summer until late fall there were apples on the farm. The first to ripen were the red June apples. Then came the early harvests and maiden blushes. Later came the horse apples, sweet russets, called rusty coats, pounds, pippins, Jonathans, and limber twigs. During the summer the apples were used only for apple sauce, stewed apples, apple cobbler, and apple pies. The late apples were best for preserving, drying, and cider making. Sweet apples made the best cider and vinegar.

Cherries were the first fruit of the season to require attention. They were used for jellying, spicing, and drying.

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Father told David and Peter that they might dry and sell as much fruit as they could find time to handle. There was more fruit on the farm than was needed, and even by giving some away and feeding some of it to the pigs, there was not so much used that the boys could not find plenty to dry. They bargained with Father for a share of the dried fruit, so that they could sell it and earn some money. They were to help pick and carry the fruit. They were also to help wash, peel, and core the apples and seed the cherries and peaches. For this work they were to receive a fifth of all the fruit dried. It was easy to sell dried fruit to the grocers in the town or to families who did not have enough fruit of their own for drying.

Besides the fruit there were berries to be picked. Wild dew-berries and blackberries grew in abundance in fields and ravines where the bushes had not been cut down. On Grandfather Blair's farm there was a ravine which was wide at the lower end but grew narrower as it ran back between the hills. In the bottom of the ravine grew a few trees and through it ran a gully. In August the gully was only a dry stream bed but in spring it was filled with a rushing torrent of muddy water which flowed down in rivulets

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from the surrounding hills. The slopes of the ravine were rocky and almost entirely covered with berry bushes and brake fern. In one place there was a clump of white locust trees. Near these trees were May apples which, in spring, showed waxy-white blossoms in the angles of the stems that supported two spreading leaves for each plant. At about the same time pink and white anemones bloomed among the rocks and wood violets were scattered among the dead leaves under the bushes.

The blackberries ripened in August. David and Peter went berrying in the mornings. They took baskets and cups along to hold the berries and wore their oldest clothes because of the way the briars caught and tore the sleeves of shirts and the legs of overalls. They wore straw hats, blue chambray shirts, and blue overalls. When they went berrying they always wore shoes, too, although in summer they usually went barefooted.

Sometimes Charles went with them and then they took a lunch along and stayed in the berry patch until afternoon. Blanche filled their lunch bucket with biscuits, slices of fried ham or pieces of fried chicken, sweet pickles, hard-boiled eggs with a paper of mixed salt and pepper to eat with

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them, cookies or chunks of molasses gingerbread and, sometimes, some "stickies," which were shell cakes made of left-over pie crust. The boys liked the "stickies" better than anything else that Blanche made. They always seemed to happen accidentally, but such accidents occurred only on days when Blanche was not too busy with other things to bother with "stickies." First the pie crust was rolled out just as it would be for a pie. It was spread with butter and sprinkled with cinnamon and brown sugar. The crust was then rolled up, cut into pieces about an inch and a half long and baked in a hot oven. When the "stickies" came out of the oven they were crisp and brown and had a caramel filling and caramel at the bottom where the sugar and butter had melted and run out.

After David and Peter had eaten all the lunch that Blanche had given them they ate berries if they were still hungry. When they came home in the afternoon with their buckets full of berries they were always ready for more food which they found in the "press" in the kitchen or in the pantry.

Just about the time that the first apples ripened the cherry season ended. The sour red cherries ripened first and were used for jelly

APPLES AND APPLE WAGONS

making. Later came the large black cherries; the Queen Anns and the ox-hearts. The birds were as busy as Peter and David when the cherries began to ripen. The catbirds, robins, yellow-hammers, and even the sparrows came and feasted on the fruit when no one was around to frighten them away. The blue jays came, too, but when a blue jay was in a tree he did not permit any other bird to come near it. He made himself so disagreeable to the smaller birds that they would fly away at the approach of this unfriendly fighter. If David and Peter saw a blue jay in the orchard or anywhere else around the place there was an immediate search for something to throw at him. Stones, clods of earth, green apples, or any other small objects which came to hand were flung at him as he flew from tree to tree, screaming defiance at them in his rage. He made a general nuisance of himself by chasing the song birds away, damaging the fruit, and stealing seeds. Despite the fact that the blue jay was so much disliked he was admitted to be a beautiful bird. With his bright blue, black and white plumage, he was one of the handsomest birds which came to the farm.

When David and Peter gathered cherries no small amount of the fruit went into their mouths

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instead of going into the bag or basket used for picking. David's basket was never full because it took so much time to select the best cherries for eating. The cherry season was very short. It lasted only a few weeks.



Toward the end of September the apples were right for harvesting. All the apples to be used for preserving and drying had to be good, sound fruit without bruises or blemishes of any kind. Windfalls were good enough for pies, apple sauce, stewed apples, and jelly since the bruised parts could be cut out and thrown away. They were also used to make cider because the apples had to be crushed or ground before the cider was pressed and a few bruises on the fruit did not change the flavor of the cider nor the strength of the vinegar.

When the sweet russets were ripe it was time for cider making. Sweet apples made the best cider and the strongest vinegar. The apples were gathered and washed in barrels or wooden tubs. They were then poured into the hopper and

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pounded down with a wooden pestle. They were ground in the mill (it was called grinding but the apples were really crushed) and dropped into a slat press under the hopper. There were two slat presses to a cider mill. While the apples in one were being pressed the other was being filled. The cider was strained through cheesecloth into a barrel, where it was left to stand and turn to vinegar. To hasten the fermentation a piece of mother from the old vinegar was put into the fresh cider. The mother is a thin, whitish substance which forms on the top of vinegar.

Cider which was to be kept sweet for drinking and cooking was put into kegs. The kegs were first smoked with sulphur to prevent fermentation. Some of the cider was, however, allowed to harden and was used for making mincemeat and fruit cake.

David and Peter came back repeatedly for drinks of the sparkling, sweet juice as it ran from the press.

When the fruit was to be prepared for drying the boys worked harder than ever before. While they were in the orchard gathering the fruit from the trees David asked, "What're you goin' to do 'ith your money?"

"What money?" asked Peter.

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"The money we'll get when we sell our dried apples."

"Oh, maybe I'll buy a set o' tools or a rifle. What are you goin' to get?"

"Nothin'. I'm goin' to save my money an' when I grow up I'll buy a farm 'ith plenty o' pigs an' chickens an' horses on it."

"Well, if you don't gather a few apples instead of eating so many there won't be any money to buy farms with."

"Huh! All you do is to think 'bout work," answered David. "I'll bet I could make plenty o' money swappin' things!"

He was always trading things with boys in school and he never failed to get the better of the bargain. On the way to school or during "little recess" he would trade an apple or a sandwich for a top, a few marbles or a knife. He kept the things he could use and the others he traded until he got something he wanted.

David and Peter gathered only such fruit as was just ripe. Over-ripe fruit which had begun to turn mealy was not used for drying. They spread the fruit, after it had been peeled, cored, and sliced, on scaffolds made of clean boards laid on saw horses in the sun. The apples were spread out and dried on one side then they were

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turned and dried on the other side. The boys liked to eat the dried apples raw and would fill their pockets with them when they went for a ramble in the fields or woods. Better than dried apples, though, was peach leather.

Grandmother Blair always made the peach leather and, when she offered it to the boys in winter when fruit was not so plentiful, it was never refused. It was made of over-ripe cling-stone peaches. The pulp was cut away from the seeds and pounded with a wooden pestle or potato masher until it was free from lumps. Sugar was then added to the pulp and it was spread about an inch thick on clean pine boards and left in the sun to dry. It shrank considerably in drying. When the leather was finished it was not more than a quarter of an inch thick. It was lifted off the boards, sprinkled with sugar, and put away to keep for the winter.

All the apples which were to be kept for winter were gathered and put into the cellar. Along two sides of the cellar there were shelves built for this purpose. These shelves were covered with straw and the apples were placed in the straw so that they would not touch each other. Air could circulate around them and, if they had been carefully picked and selected, they would keep until the

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next spring. The cellar was cool and dark and had an even temperature.



When apple butter was made Aunt Margaret, who was Jerry's wife, made it. She came early in the morning, bringing her own copper kettle and ladle with her. The kettle had been scoured with salt and wood ashes until it shone in burnished splendor.

"Wood ashes, salt, an' plenty o' elbow grease is what hit takes to make things shine," Aunt Margaret used to say. "If ye want to ye kin moisten hit with a leetle bit o' water or vinegar, but don't fergit the elbow grease." And, judging by the polish on the kettle, she had used enough of the last-mentioned ingredient.

Aunt Margaret crossed the pasture and climbed over the stile near the spring. Near the spring, along the banks of the spring branch, were beds of wild mint. The stream was full of water cress which moved slowly to and fro as the water from the spring flowed gently around it. She looked at the mint and hesitated. "Rec-kon I'll jest take some o' that an' make m'self

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a cup o' peppermint tea," she said. As she bent to gather a few sprigs of the mint something flashed through the air and went splashing into the water of the brook.

"There, now, that's that old moccasin. I knowed he's always hangin' around here an' hit's best to be keerful o' them critters. They kin bite somethin' terrible." She gathered the mint and went up the path toward the house with her kettle hanging on her arm and the long ladle over her shoulder like a scythe.

As Aunt Margaret came around to the back of the house to present herself and her kettle at the kitchen door, she saw Peter coming from the back yard with two buckets of milk. He had just finished milking and was going to put the milk into the spring house after he had strained it into the milk pans standing in a shining row on a shelf in the sun outside.

He saw Aunt Margaret and called "Hello" to her. When she turned he asked, "Goin' to make apple butter?"

"Howdy, honey! 'At's jest what I'm fixin to do."

"Well, we peeled and cored three bushels of milams last night."

"That'll make a right smart o' apple butter when hit's cooked down in good cider."

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"Can't be too much," said Peter as he set the buckets down and took some pans from the shelf.

Aunt Margaret went up the back steps and into the kitchen.

"Here ye are, bright 'n' early," said Blanche as Margaret entered.

"Yes, indeed, all my life I been up an' doin' about 'fore the dew had a chance to dry up on the grass," she said, laying her mint down on the kitchen table.

"Won't ye have a cup o' coffee an' a bite to eat?"

"Come to think on it, that would be a right nice way to start the day," answered Margaret. "I'll jest hustle around an' see 'bout startin' my fire first. After the folks have et I'll come in an' have a cup o' coffee an' a biscuit with a little red gravy on it." Blanche was frying ham, therefore the red gravy.

As Peter poured the milk into the pans he realized that he was hungry. The odor of fried ham and coffee, blended with wood smoke in the crisp morning air, had whetted his appetite. He finished straining the milk and took the pans into the spring house, where he put them on flat stones in the water. The stones were two inches under the surface of the water and when

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the milk pans were placed on them the cool spring water flowed around their sides and chilled the milk. At one end of the spring house the water was deeper than at the other. Things which had to be placed in deep water to cool were put there. Watermelons, muskmelons, and cantaloupes were always cooled in the spring house before they were eaten. Peter closed the door and went to the house to eat his breakfast.

Aunt Margaret prepared a place for making the apple butter. She placed three stones on the ground and set the kettle on them, putting some cider in it to boil down. Next she built a fire. She whittled splinters from a pine stick and placed them crosswise over a piece of stove wood to keep them off the ground and to make a draft. On the splinters she placed some dry wood and lighted the splinters underneath. The smoke began to curl up in heavy gray wreaths in the still air. The chips caught fire, the flames sprang up and lapped the sides of the kettle. As the flames rose around the bottom of the kettle the smoke became thin and transparent.

While the cider was boiling, Margaret went into the kitchen and had her breakfast. After breakfast she added more cider and let it boil down again and then added some apples. When

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the appies began to get soft and break as they cooked, she put more apples into the pot until it was about three fourths full. She put her ladle



into the pot then and began to stir. The ladle was made of two pieces of wood. One piece was a round pole ten feet long. This formed the handle. The other piece was a flat paddle with a hole near one end, through which the bottom of the handle went and was held firmly by a wooden peg which pierced its breadth. The end of the paddle splayed out and had three holes bored through it. The fire had died down and been replenished. It was giving a good even heat.

Margaret sat on a split-bottom chair, a large white apron covering her legs and knees and falling almost to the hem of her blue and white calico dress. Around her head a white kerchief was tied with the ends pointing up. She was of ample proportions and seemed to spread out when she sat down. The apples boiled slowly, and as the bubbles rose to the top and broke, the steam spattered scalding hot drops of marmalade



AUNT MARGARET MADE THE APPLE BUTTER

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lade in every direction. It was because of the flying hot butter that the long-handled ladle was used to stir it. As the mixture in the kettle boiled down more apples and cider were added. All morning and afternoon Margaret sat and stirred, with only an occasional interruption to repair the fire. As she stirred she crooned her favorite hymns, timing the rhythm of the music to the stirring of the butter. Many spirituals helped her in the making of apple butter.

Margaret continued to stir and add more cider when the butter seemed to be getting too thick. The afternoon wore on and the trees cast long shadows across the field and meadows. When the sun was just dropping behind the hills she put the spice and sugar into the pot. Three pounds of sugar were put in for each gallon of apple butter. The cooking continued very slowly for another hour and then the apple butter was finished.

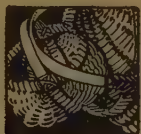
As soon as the sugar and spice had been cooked into the apple butter David and Peter wanted to try some on a slice of bread. They said it never tasted so good as it did when it was fresh and warm from the kettle.

In the late fall and early spring covered wagons came over the mountains from North Carolina.

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They were called apple wagons. The people who lived back in the mountains had planted their orchards in sheltered coves and the apples produced in those orchards were exceptionally fine. The wagons were driven over the miserable mountain roads, stony and full of ruts, down into the hills of Tennessee. The people who came with the wagons had to spend several nights on the road, going and coming. They brought food and bedding with them. At night they camped in open spaces beside the roads. They made a fire and cooked their meals. They boiled coffee, fried some "side meat," and in the fat from the fried pork, they baked their "hoe cakes." These were corn pones made of corn meal and water put into the hot skillet and browned, then turned over to brown on the other side. They ate their supper and slept in the wagons on the fodder which covered the apples, and wrapped themselves in patchwork quilts. In the morning they were up just as the first rays of dawn began to color the sky over the mountains in the east. They cooked their breakfast of coffee, bacon, and hoe cake, fed some of the fodder to the horses, and before the sun was in the sky they were on the road to town. The road to town was a long one for the people who lived in the mountains.

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When they came in the spring, the mountain people sometimes brought split hickory chairs and baskets to sell. They had made these things in the winter when there was little else to do. All winter long during cold and rainy weather the men split the wood, shaped the legs, rungs, and slats for the chairs and fitted them together. The wood was first split with a frow and then shaped. The hickory to be used for chair seats and larger baskets was split into long strips about a half inch wide and one sixteenth of an inch thick. The chair bottoms were always woven with a basket weave. Although it was possible to get rushes from the streams or marshes to use for making these seats, the mountaineers scorned them and preferred split bottoms instead, even if they did take more time and labor.

"That hain't no way to bottom ch'irs," they said. "Hickory's more lastin' 'an anythin' else."

Split-bottom baskets never seemed to wear out. They stood any amount of moisture or drought and, if they got dirty, they could be scrubbed clean again.

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While the men spent their time making baskets and chairs the women were at work on other things. All of them made patchwork quilts and sewed for the family, while a few wove rag rugs and carpets. The squares of patchwork were made of pieces of colored or printed material left over from the making of clothes. The colored scraps were cut into strips, squares, diamonds, triangles, circles, and several other shapes and then sown into different patterns against a white background. The patterns were usually made in squares of from eight to ten inches. The squares were sewn together and alternated with squares of white so as to form strips the length of the quilts.

"Now, then," a woman would say as she finished a square of patchwork and put it into the workbasket with other squares, "Mary Bean hain't got nothin' as purty as 'at. She's usin' yaller in her Washington wreath, an' I never could abide yaller. Hit's such a sickly color. Pink's a heap purtier and goes good together with the green. Soon as I git this here finished I'm goin' to have a quiltin' bee. If the hens is layin' right I'll have boiled custard an' cup cakes an' boiled cider."

Quilts were usually finished at "bees." A

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quilting "bee" was given by a woman when she had finished her patchwork and was ready to have it quilted. She invited her neighbors to come and help her on a certain afternoon. Occasionally the "bee" began with a dinner and lasted through the afternoon. Before the women who had been invited to help quilt arrived, the patchwork was stretched on a quilting frame with the patchwork on the underside. A layer of cotton batting or wool was put on this, and the other side of the quilt, which was made of white cotton material, was put on the batting and basted into place. A pattern had been drawn on the white material to indicate where it was to be quilted. After the quilting was finished the quilt was taken off the frame and its edges were bound.

Rag rugs were woven on large looms which occupied one corner of a room, usually near a window. The rags to be used in weaving were torn into strips and the strips were rolled into balls of different colors. Some of the rag rugs were made of braided strips of cloth sewn together. The braided rugs were always round or oval but the woven rugs were rectangular.

The apple wagons sometimes brought in rag rugs which were for sale, but not often. Split

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hickory and apples were what they usually carried in the spring, but in the fall they brought only apples.

Peter and David went down to the road with Mother when she bought some Baldwins or pippins in the spring. Once Mother bought a split-bottom basket and two chairs for the kitchen from a man who had a whole wagonload of chairs and baskets. The man who sold them to her showed the boys a bunch of very small baskets made exactly like the large ones. The small baskets were not more than two inches high and two inches wide.

"I like the little ones," Peter said, handling one of the baskets. "How much are they?"

"Ef ye like 'em, son, ye kin have one an' hit won't cost ye airy a red." "Airy a red" meant "not a red cent."

Peter wanted to pay for the basket but the man told him to take it "as a keepsake." That made it a present.

David and Peter sold their dried apples and Peter bought a tool set with his money. David saved his money and used Peter's tools until they were all dull, then he lost interest in them.





V

SOFT SOAP AND PORK

UNCLE JERRY was building something in the woodyard. The woodyard was at the end of the lane which led up from the road to the barnyard. That was where the cordwood was stacked until it was sawed into fire logs for the fireplace or split into stove wood for the kitchen. Uncle Jerry had decided that the best place to build an ash hopper was just beside the garden gate. He had been making ash hoppers since the days when soft soap was used for all the washing and scrubbing done around the house. "Store" soap was at that time neither cheap nor plentiful enough to make it the necessity it had since become.

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Uncle Jerry had ideas about how an ash hopper should be built which were a little difficult to carry out. He insisted that the hopper should be built of rived boards and have a trough made of half a log with a groove down the center for a drain. The groove had to be deeper at one end than at the other so that the lye could drain into a bucket or crock placed under the lower end.

The hopper was made by driving four stakes into the ground at the four corners of a rectangle measuring about two and a half by three feet. Four pieces of narrow boarding or lathing were nailed to the tops of the stakes. The two ends of each board were nailed to the tops of two of the stakes. This formed a frame to support the boards of the sides and ends. The log to be used for the trough was placed lengthwise on the ground in the center of the space between the four stakes. The boards forming the sides were placed in the groove in the log and allowed to slope outward against the rails at the top. After the sides had been finished the end boards were placed. Narrow boards were placed inside over the cracks and the interior was lined with straw. Over the top Uncle Jerry put a covering of boards which sloped to one side of the hopper for



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the purpose of shedding the water when it rained.

Uncle Jerry had finished the hopper and Blanche was going to save the hickory ash from the kitchen stove to fill it. When hickory wood had been used for cooking the ashes were allowed to cool until all the heat was out of them and then they were poured into the hopper. The hopper was kept covered until the lye was drawn off the ashes by pouring water into it. The water filtered through the ashes and ran down the trough into the log at the bottom. An iron kettle or crock was placed under the lower end of the log to catch the lye as it ran out.



After the ashes had been leached the lye had to be boiled down in an iron kettle until it was the right strength for making soap. Blanche said that the best way to test the strength of lye when it was boiling was "to take a chicken feather from the wing or the tail and dip it into the lye three times while you count three. If the lye eats the feather it is too strong, it should take six

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counts. Lye that is too strong or too weak will not eat the fat."

The lye was not to be drawn off until "hog-killin'" time came late in the fall or early winter when there was a "good freeze."

Uncle Joe insisted that "the best time to butcher is after a heavy frost and a little freeze. There ought to be a sheet of ice as thick as a pane of glass on standin' water. The animal heat should be out of the pork in twelve hours to prevent spoilin'."

Late in September there was a light frost one night. For the following few days the weather was warm and the distant mountains were obscured by a gray haze. Toward the end of the month the weather showed signs of changing. Everyone who understood climatic conditions in this mountain country said it was "going to turn bad."

Just after sunset one evening the rain began to fall. It was a warm rain which came down in a nice gentle patter. There was no wind and the sky was overcast with a heavy, leaden gray. The rain continued for several days until a wind came up one afternoon. It was a north wind with a chill in it. The rain stopped and rifts began to show in the clouds to the north and the northwest. At sunset there were red streaks in the sky

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back of Blair's farm. That night was cold and clear. A few mornings later there was a white frost over everything out-of-doors. The roofs of the barn and all the sheds and out-houses were covered with glistening white crystals. The sun came up warm and clear but a crispness stayed in the air. It was the beginning of Indian summer.

It was like this that Indian summer came, with a lazy, bluish mist which clung to the landscape and gave the distant hills and woods a mellow tone. The heavy frost had blighted the flowers and vegetables but it had colored the leaves of the trees and shrubs with the glory of autumn. The sugar maples were turning to orange and red. The soft maples, sycamores, poplars, and some of the other soft-wood trees turned to varying shades of yellow. Here and there in the woods on the side of a hill were tall gum trees that shot out a blaze of scarlet. Beside old fence rows and the edges of woods, sassafras trees and bushes were putting on their variegated coats of yellow, red, and orange. It was summer's last blaze of glory before leaving the landscape to the drab tones of winter. Wild asters bloomed in the fence corners and the wild honeysuckle still scattered its incomparable sweetness on the air

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beside roads and lanes to show its defiance of a mere frost.

Indian summer lasted for several weeks with its mellow warmth. The sunlight filtered through the blue haze with a subdued brilliance and as soon as the sun sank behind the hills there was a crisp coolness in the air. During this entire season there was but one day of rain. The roads became dry and dusty and the dying weeds beside them became covered with a heavy layer of dust. The persimmons began to ripen because of repeated frosts and the chestnut trees were dropping their nuts from the open burrs. Farmers gathered in their corn and cut and shocked their fodder in the fields. Around the fodder shocks the yellow pumpkins were piled on the ground until they were taken into the barn or cellar where they were kept in readiness to be used for pumpkin pies or fed to the cattle or made into grinning jack-o'-lanterns for Hallowe'en.

David and Peter each had a jack-o'-lantern which they made themselves. They fashioned them with their jackknives by cutting out a round piece from the top or the stem end. In cutting out this piece they always sloped the blade of the knife toward the center of the pumpkin. This was done so the lid, or piece cut out,

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would rest on the pumpkin and not fall inside. They then scooped out the seeds and fiber from the inside and drew a face on the outside. The features were cut out with the knife in order to let the light from the burning candle, inside, shine through the holes. In the bottom of the pumpkin a round hole was cut in the pulp just large enough to serve as a candle holder.

After dark on Hallowe'en the jack-o'-lanterns were lighted and placed on the front porch to greet any visitors who might call that evening.

The mild, clear weather lasted well into November. After a heavy rain which kept up for two days the weather turned cold. There was a freeze and a heavy frost. This was just the right season for "hog killin'."

One fine, clear morning, when a heavy frost was still white on the ground and roofs, the hogs were butchered. There was a great squealing and grunting as the hogs were dragged out of their pens where they had been fattening on the corn and slops from the kitchen that had been fed to them. Peter and David had their breakfast and then hurried to the barnyard to help before they went to school. They found that the hogs had already been killed and that Jerry and Jack, the hired man, were preparing to scald and scrape

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them. A large bonfire had been built in the barnyard and stones had been piled on the wood to get hot. There were two barrels of water standing near the fire. When the stones were very hot they were dropped in the water. Enough stones were put into each barrel to make the water boil. When the water was hot enough it was poured over the butchered hogs, which had been laid on clean boards, and then the bristles were scraped off with a butcher knife. After the hogs had been scraped and washed they were hung by their hind legs on a rail which was placed on two posts about seven feet high.

The hogs were slit down the middle and drawn. The leaf lard, or fat from around the kidneys, was taken out and the fat also removed from the entrails. This fat from the entrails was put to soak in cold salt water to prevent it from having a strong flavor after it was rendered.

Uncle Jerry wanted the "chidlin's," a delicacy greatly relished by him. Father said that he might have them and also the heart, liver, and stomach. The heart and liver were used for

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sausage and the stomach was cleaned and soaked and made into tripe. Margaret, Jerry's wife, always did this and sent some of the tripe and sausage back to the farm to show her appreciation and to prove her ability as a cook and housekeeper.

The pork was left to hang until the next day. Overnight it became thoroughly chilled.

Blanche scoured and scrubbed the lard kettles and had them ready for use the next day. These were large, round-bottom iron kettles holding twenty gallons each. The leaf fat was rendered first without any other fat being mixed with it, as this made the best lard. The fat was cut into two-inch cubes. A pint of hot water was put into the kettle and when it began to boil two or three pounds of the leaf fat were added, when this mixture began to boil again more fat was added in larger quantities. The lard continued to cook gently until the cracklings became a nice golden brown. While it was cooking the lard had to be stirred continuously, to prevent any pieces of fat from sticking to the kettle and scorching. After the cracklings began to brown Blanche added two heaping teaspoonfuls of soda (bi-carbonate) to the lard to clarify it.

When the lard had finished cooking it was

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strained through a cloth into crocks or large tins which had been washed, scalded, and sweetened in the sun. The cracklings were emptied into a lard or jelly press lined with a cloth, and pressed.



As Blanche was emptying the cracklings from the press she said to David, who had just come home from school, "I'll bet you a pretty, Uncle Jerry's mouth is just a-waterin' fer some good cracklin' bread. I'll give him a few cracklin's to take along in a paper poke when he goes home. And the rest o' 'em ye kin take to your grandma to put in the dog bread. Yer grandpa's huntin' dogs would appreciate some cracklin's."

"Well," said David, "you needn't think that Uncle Jerry and Grandpa's bird dogs are the only ones who'd like cracklin's. I could use a few myself."

"There they are, Davey," said Blanche as she spread the crisp brown cracklings on a saucer and sprinkled a dash of salt on them. "Popcorn is mighty fine but cracklin's are better. 'Tain't every day you can have 'em, either."

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When David finished eating he took the cracklings which Blanche had put into a pail and went over to Grandmother's.

That night Blanche put the fat in salt water to soak. The next morning she washed it in fresh water. Then she let it stand in fresh water for an hour to be sure that there was no salt left in it. She used this and all the clear fat trimmed from the shoulders, hams, and loins to make more lard. All the scraps of fat with any appreciable amount of lean on them went into the sausage.



David and Peter helped with the sausage making and took turns at grinding. Blanche cut up the meat into pieces which would go into the mill. The meat used for sausage was taken from the loins, the shoulders, and the trimmings from them, as well as any other good lean meat that was free from all strings and gristle and had been trimmed off other cuts when the pork was cut into pieces. To five pounds of lean meat Blanche added a pound of the fat. The meat which David and Peter were grinding was put into large mix-

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ing bowls in ten-pound quantities and seasoned with salt, black pepper, and a little dry sage, crushed very fine. It was mixed thoroughly and then a cake of it was fried and carried to Mother for approval. Each lot was tested in this way and, after Mother had tasted it and expressed her satisfaction with the seasoning, David and Peter finished the cake.

It was a custom among the neighbors to send sausage, when they made it, around the district to their friends. They kept what they needed and gave away as much as they could conveniently spare. Some of the sausage was kept for use in the late winter and spring. This was done by frying it in cakes until it was thoroughly done, packing the cakes down in crocks so as to fill them almost to the top, then pouring the fat, which had rendered out in frying, over them and finally sealing the crocks with a layer of melted lard. These sausages when taken out of the fat in the spring and heated in a frying pan were just as good as the sausages which were eaten when first made.

The jars of cooked sausage were kept in the cellar or the smoke house where there was a cool temperature.

The hams, shoulders, bacons or side-meat,

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chines (the thick part of the spine between the shoulders), and the jowls were usually smoked. The fattest part of the middlings was used for salt pork and was cured with salt only. The heads and feet were used for souse or head cheese, and for pickling. The meat which was to be cured was laid on a shelf made of new pine boards, in the smoke house. The shelf was first covered with about an inch of salt. The meat was rubbed well with salt and laid skin side down on the shelf. This was to let the salt penetrate the raw side from the top. The pieces were laid close together and salt packed into the crevices between them. For the hams a half pound of brown sugar was added to each ten pounds of salt and a little saltpeter was put in, too. Each layer of ham and bacon was covered with a layer of salt before the next layer was put on. After all the meat had been salted it was covered with a clean cloth and left to stand for two weeks. The meat was unpacked at the end of that time. All the loose salt was then shaken off and the shelf cleaned. The pork was repacked in fresh salt and left to stand three weeks longer in dry weather or two weeks in damp weather. Before being repacked in salt the hams were rubbed over again with sugar and red pepper. When the meat was taken up the

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second time the pieces were wiped all over with a cloth and in each piece a loop of hemp twine was placed. The pieces of salted meat were hung by the loops on the rafters in the top of the smoke house. They were left to hang for two days before the smoking began. On the morning of the third day came the important event of starting the fire for smoking.



Father always started the fire and superintended the care of it through the weeks of smoking required to cure the pork. David and Peter were on hand to see how the fire was built and in the morning before going to school and again after they came home in the afternoons, they tended the fire. The smoke house had an earthen floor with a brick hearth in the middle of it. The fire was built on this brick hearth inside a square of loose bricks. It was started with a few dry shavings and chips, with some logs of green hickory laid over them. The green logs were placed close together and covered with green hickory bark and chips. The fires were smothered out at night with ashes and built up fresh in the

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morning. In the last week the volume of smoke was reduced. During the whole time the fire was never allowed to break into flames and the meat was hung so high that only the smoke and not the heat could reach it. This was all very important, but there remained one more thing to be done before the hams were ready to be left to ripen.

After the smoking was finished the hams had to be cured. They were first wrapped in cheese-cloth, then in layers of brown butcher's paper, and last a covering of burlap was sewn on the outside and the ham was dipped in a thick whitewash. This whitewash had to be thick enough to fill completely the weave of the closely woven burlap. Hams cured in this way were always kept for at least a year before they were used and sometimes two. After more than two years, however, they did not continue to improve in flavor.

Blanche and Mother attended to the sausage making, to pickling the pigs' feet, and to cooking the souse. To remove the hoofs from the feet, Blanche dipped them in boiling lye. David and Peter liked nothing better than a pig's foot to eat when they came home hungry from school. After Blanche had finished these tasks she turned her attention to making soap.

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First Blanche leached the ashes and dripped the lye. The ashes were moistened with a little water and left to stand for a day to "draw." An iron kettle was placed in a round hole dug at the end of the trough. More water was poured on the ashes. It filtered through them and drew off the lye which ran into the kettle. The lye was strong enough to eat the skin off one's hand. Blanche boiled the lye down to the right strength and tested it with a chicken feather. All the scraps of fat and drippings which had been saved for this purpose were boiled down, strained, and clarified. She added the fat to the boiling lye, stirring the mixture with a sassafras stick. She put the soft soap into wooden buckets, but some of the soap was boiled down and poured into molds to harden. This soap had salt added to it in the boiling, and when the bars became dry and hard, the salt would crystallize on the outside of them.

Blanche used soft soap to scrub the kitchen floor and tables, and the washerwoman always took a piece of "bar soap" away in the bundle of clothes she carried tied in a sheet.





VI

AFTER SUPPER

DAVID, Peter, and Charles always came home together from school. In the fall and spring, when the afternoons were long, they often stayed together for an hour or two before it was time to do the chores. In winter, when the days were very short, there was no time for play before it grew dark. They each had their work to do and when that was finished the boys usually studied before supper. They liked to get through with their lessons early so that they could have the evenings free to do whatever they liked. Sometimes they asked Charles to come over "after supper."

The boys parted at the gate. Charles went on

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down the road and Peter and David went up the path to the house between the two rows of maples, which now spread their bare branches against the winter sky.

Halfway to the house Peter turned and called, "Be sure and come early!"

Charles answered, "I'll be over right after supper."

"Bring your 'coon over," David called.

"All right," answered Charles.

In the winter David and Peter had to bring in wood for the fires and split kindling for starting them in the morning. Peter helped with the milking and feeding of the animals. David fed the chickens and went through the henhouses gathering up the fresh eggs.

David would go into the chicken yard and call "Chi-ck, chick, chick, chick, chick." The chickens came running from all directions. He scattered the cracked corn on the ground for them. For the guineas and some of the chickens he threw handfuls of the corn farther out because they were too shy to come close to him when they ate. David finished his work before Peter had finished milking.

While Peter milked, the two cats sat and watched him. They always came down to the

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barn at milking time and waited to be fed. When Peter went back to the spring house to strain the milk and put it to cool the cats followed or ran ahead, stopping now and then to look back at him. When he had finished straining the milk he poured some into a pan and gave it to the cats.

The boys told Mother that they had asked Charles to come over after supper.

"What are you going to do?" she asked.

"We'd like to make taffy," answered David.

"You may have taffy if you like," Mother said.

"Ask Blanche to keep the fire going in the kitchen stove this evening."

When Charles came that evening he brought his pet raccoon with him. The 'coon was called Nubbins because he had been so small when Charles got him. Then, he was just a little funny ball with a tiny nose and two bright eyes peering out. Now he had grown considerably. As he sat on Charles's shoulder he looked into the kitchen. Then he rubbed his nose, sneezed, and shook his head.

"Look at Nubbins," said David, "he's just like folks."

"He's a heap cleaner 'n most animals," Charles answered. "I gave him some meat fer his supper

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an' he wouldn't eat a bite until he had washed every bit of it."

"That's right smart o' him, ain't hit," said Blanche, who was fond of animals. "Come right in and set Nubbins on a chair."

Charles came in and put Nubbins down. He unwound the scarf around his neck and took off his mittens. He put them and his cap on the chair Nubbins was occupying. Nubbins sniffed at the things, and then, satisfied that they really were Charles's, he lay down, after turning around two or three times like a dog, and watched the proceedings.

"Peter, ye kin jest run down cellar an' git a little vinegar. Don't suppose ye kin make taffy 'ithout vinegar, do ye?" asked Blanche.

"How much vinegar, Blanche?" Peter wanted to know.

"Here's a teacup. About half full'll be enough."

"Come on, Charles," said Peter, as he took a candle to light the way.

They went outside and lifted the cellar door. Charles carried the cup and Peter carried the candle, shielding it with his hand. As they went down the cellar steps Peter said, "We'll get some apples and walnuts, too."

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Blanche measured four cups of sugar and poured it into a pan, then she measured half a cupful of water and put that in, too, and set the pan on the fire.

David was petting Nubbins and feeding him chestnuts. When David stopped feeding him, Nubbins put his paw into David's pocket and took out a nut.

"Aw, ain't he cute!" said David.

"Now, where air them young uns with that vinegar," grumbled Blanche as she opened the back door. "Oh, Peter!" she called.

"In a minute," answered Peter.

Charles and Peter came up out of the cellar with the vinegar and some apples. When they had given the vinegar to Blanche and put the apples on the kitchen table they began to take black walnuts out of their pockets.

"What ye goin' to do with them walnuts?" asked Blanche.



"Shell 'em," answered Peter.

"Well, if ye all turn to an' git 'em shelled by the time that taffy is done I'll make some wal-

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nut brittle, too. 'Tain't no trouble an' yer ma is right fond o' hit." She poured half a cupful of vinegar into the pan in which the sugar and water had begun to boil.

The boys got two hammers and two flatirons and began to crack the walnuts. David took the kernels out of the shells.

"Jest as soon as this taffy comes to a hard ball I'll pour hit an' set hit outside to cool," Blanche remarked as she buttered two plates in preparation for the taffy.

The three boys cracked and shelled walnuts busily. Nubbins lay on his chair and watched everything. Now and then David handed him a walnut kernel which he took in his paw and turned over, carefully inspecting it to see if it was clean, before he would eat it.

Blanche finished buttering the plates, drew a glass of water from the pump in the kitchen and dipped her spoon into the boiling syrup, being careful not to stir it. She lifted the spoon out and held it high above the pan, letting the heavy liquid drop off the end of it. The syrup was not ready to pour so she helped David shell walnuts in the meantime. After a few minutes she tried the candy again. This time it dropped more slowly from the point of the spoon. The last

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drops fell very slowly, spinning a fine thread of sugar as they descended. Blanche dipped her spoon in again and let the candy drip into the cold water. The drops hardened as they touched the water and fell to the bottom of the glass.

"There, now, it's jest right to pour," she said, and lifted the pan from the stove. Then she put a few drops of flavoring in it.

The taffy was poured onto the buttered platters and set outside to cool. Blanche put two cupfuls of sugar into the pan and set it back on the stove. She buttered another platter and spread the walnut meats on it.

"Wash yer hands an' butter yer fingers," Blanche said. "That taffy'll be ready to pull in no time."

Peter tried the taffy by poking it with the end of a buttered finger. The candy was beginning to harden. He and Charles brought it into the kitchen and began to pull it. The first taffy they took from around the sides of the dish, where it had begun to harden. After this was well started they took more and kept pulling it. David started some taffy, too. When Charles and Peter had the taffy pulling well, they put their two batches together and pulled the candy between them. As they pulled the taffy grew whiter and the

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ropes grew longer. When it became so stiff that it was hard to pull they drew it out into a long rope and cut it up into small pieces.

"How's the brittle, Blanche?" Peter asked as he cut the taffy.

"Mighty near ready," Blanche answered. She watched the bubbles in the pan as they rose to the top of the boiling sugar and broke. Gradually they became smaller. The sugar was taking on a nice golden color. Blanche poured the melted sugar over the walnut kernels and left the candy to cool.

David's taffy did not come out as well as the other. He had not washed his hands quite clean and the candy had a strange grayish look. When he started to break it into the platter with the rest of the taffy Peter stopped him.

"Don't put any of that funny lookin' stuff in with our candy."

"What's the matter 'ith it?" David demanded.

"Now that you've asked me," Peter said, "I'll tell you that I think it's dirty. Besides, you didn't pull it enough. It ought to be white."

"All right," said David. "I'll put mine in a saucer. To-morrow I'll take it to school and swap it for somethin'." And he did.

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The walnut brittle had hardened by this time and Blanche lifted it from the platter and broke it into pieces. As she struck it with a knife it splintered like glass. She put some pieces on a dish and handed it to David.

"Take that in the settin' room to yer ma," she said.

Peter and Charles ate taffy and talked about the battle of Bunker Hill which had taken place at school that day. Bunker Hill was a mound in one corner of the schoolyard. Nobody knew how it had come there and the boys insisted that it was an Indian mound. At recess one group or grade would take possession of the hill and another group would try to overpower the first and seize the mound for themselves. These free-for-all tussles were called battles. It was good fun and good exercise and the pupils never grew tired of the game.

Charles said that it was time for him to go home. He wound his scarf around his neck, pulled his cap down over his ears, and put on his mittens. Nubbins sat on his haunches and reached out with his fore paws for Charles to take him.

"All right, Nubbins, we're goin' now," Charles said, as he picked up the little animal.

Blanche gave Charles some of the walnut

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brittle and taffy in a paper sack. He said good-night to them all and went home

On evenings when Charles did not come over to visit David and Peter, Father would sometimes tell the boys stories about the Indians who had lived in Tennessee before white men came there. He also told them about the pioneers who had come over the mountains and settled the country and about the men who had first formed a government and administered justice. There were stories about Daniel Boone, John Sevier, and Andrew Jackson, all famous men who had lived hereabout.

Daniel Boone had crossed the mountains from North Carolina and, cutting his way through unexplored forests, he made the Boone trail over into Kentucky. At that time the district now called Tennessee was a part of North Carolina. He crossed the Blue Ridge Mountains with a small party of backwoodsmen and came down into Tennessee. Daniel Boone was a mighty hunter as well as an explorer. Once he killed a bear on the banks of a small Tennessee creek which has since been named Boone Creek. After the bear was dead he took his hunting knife and cut a record of his deed into the bark of the tree which had been the scene of

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battle. Father told the boys that he had, himself, seen the tree upon which the legend could still be read.

"That was a good story," said Peter. "Now tell us what Andrew Jackson did when he lived here."

"He came here as a young lawyer," Father answered, "but in a short time he was made a judge.

"He was a fearless man who knew how to handle the rough prisoners brought before him for trial. I'll tell you about one case that he tried in the log courthouse here that shows just the kind of a man Jackson was.

"A certain Russel Bean, who seems to have been a very bad character, lived near here. He had been disturbing the peace of the neighborhood and was to be tried. The high sheriff of Washington County, a man named John Whittier, was given the warrant for Bean's arrest so he took some deputies and set out to bring him in to court. Sheriff Whittier probably took Bean by surprise for he succeeded in making the arrest, but on the way into town the prisoner managed to escape 'by force of arms,' as the old record says.

"When the case of Russel Bean was called Sheriff Whittier stood up alone.

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“‘Produce your prisoner,’ commanded Jackson, before whom the case was to be tried.

“‘He’s not here,’ said Whittier.

“‘Hasn’t he been arrested and ordered to appear in court to-day?’

“‘Yes, Jedge, but he wouldn’t come,’ was Whittier’s answer.

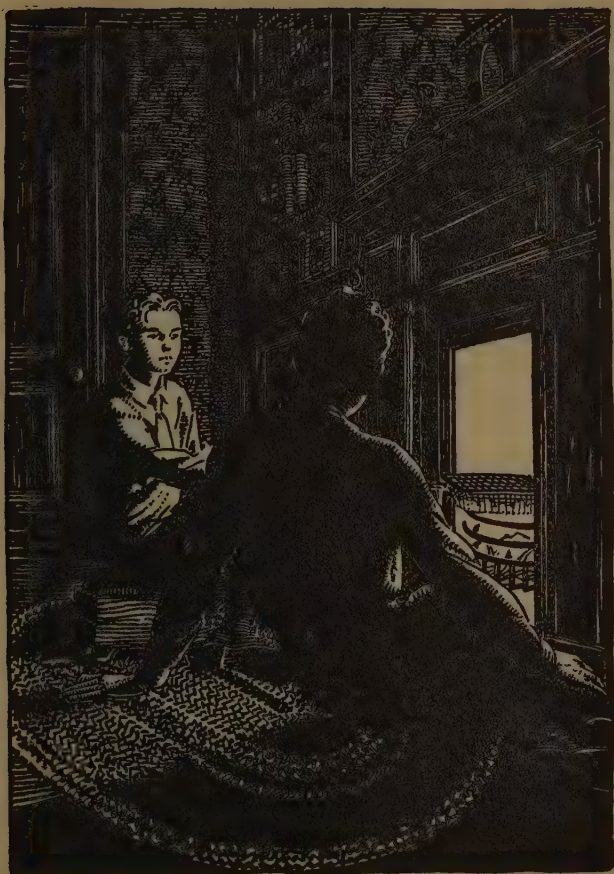
“‘He must come!’ thundered Andrew Jackson, ‘Swear me in as a deputy and I’ll go out and bring him in myself!’

“So Jackson stepped down from the Bench, and was sworn in as a deputy sheriff. Then he went outside, unhitched his horse from the post before the courthouse, and galloped off to the south end of town. Boldly he rode up to Russel Bean’s house and demanded his surrender. Just what happened then no one knows, but it was not long before Andrew Jackson was back in the courthouse. And with him was the prisoner, Russel Bean.

“Jackson turned his man over to the sheriff, and returned to the bench. Then, as judge, he heard Russel Bean’s case and pronounced sentence upon the prisoner.”

“What did they do to Russel Bean?” David asked.

“The Court records don’t state the nature of



THEY POPPED CORN

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his punishment but I am sure Jackson did not let him off easily," Father said

While they listened to their father's stories the boys shelled and roasted nuts, toasted marshmallows, or popped corn.

In the fall they had gone into the woods with their lunch and had spent whole days hunting chestnuts, butternuts (white walnuts), beech-nuts, and hickory nuts. On their rambles the boys found a great many other things, which lived or grew in the fields and woods. Once they had found a clump of paw-paws in an old stream bed where a creek had changed its course. The bushes were full of fruit which David and Peter gathered and ate. The paw-paws were a yellowish green and had large brown seeds about the shape and size of a small lima bean. The pulp was soft and sweet, with a very pungent odor. The boys went through the thicket picking and eating the fruit.

"It tastes like strawberries," said David, his mouth full of paw-paw.

"Tastes like banana to me," Peter said.

"I think it tastes like strawberries, an' bananas an' a lot of other good things," Charles said. He was right. Paw-paws taste like a combination of many fruits blended into one.

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On the other side of the thicket they found some chinquapin bushes. The burrs, like tiny chestnut burrs in appearance, had opened and dropped the nuts onto the ground. Chinquapins do not need frost to open the burrs. The boys scraped the leaves away from the ground under the bushes to find the nuts. Squirrels had carried off most of the chinquapins but a few were still left.

Later in the fall they went to the woods again to hunt for chestnuts and hickory nuts. They found a great many nuts and, whenever they came across a persimmon tree, they bumped the trunk with a rail or stone to make the ripe fruit fall. If the persimmons were not ripe enough to fall at the slight jar they were too green to eat, for a green persimmon is a most unpleasant mouthful. It may taste all right at first, but in a few seconds it puckers one's mouth and covers the tongue and teeth with a disagreeable astringent.

Peter and David knew that chestnuts are best if they are gathered before they have fallen to the ground, so they used to knock the burrs off the tree and then pound them open with a stone to get the nuts out.

The black walnuts came from a large tree in

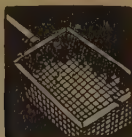
AFTER SUPPER

the backyard. There were several other walnut trees on the place, too. The three boys had worked together in gathering the nuts and divided their harvest equally. Together they hulled the walnuts, sitting on the ground with stones between their outspread legs, pounding off the acrid green hulls with hammers. These nuts, after they had been hulled, were left lying in the sun to dry. The juice from the walnuts stained the boys' fingers a dark, rich brown color which could not be washed off. If the juice got onto their clothes it made an indelible stain which lasted as long as the clothes did.

David and Peter ate the chestnuts raw or roasted them in the ashes of the fireplace. Hot ashes were pulled out in front of the burning logs. The chestnuts were spread on them and covered with more ashes and live coals, then left for several minutes to roast. When they were done they were raked out of the ashes, brushed off, shelled, and eaten.

Corn was popped on the open fire in the sitting room. David had raised the popcorn in the garden. When it was to be popped he brought some ears from the barn where it had been hung on the rafters to dry. He and Peter shelled the corn by rubbing two ears together. This method

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prevented them from blistering their thumbs. As the corn was popped it was emptied from the popper into a dishpan. Sometimes the popcorn was made into balls by pouring a thick syrup, of sugar and water or boiled molasses, over it and then, before the syrup cooled, shaping the mixture into balls. Again it was doused with melted butter and salt, or the boys filled drinking glasses with the crisp white grains, sprinkled sugar over them, and poured cream on top. This concoction they ate with large spoons. But, usually, they ate the corn without any additions, just as it fell from the popper.

"Seems like you could go on eatin' this all your life," David remarked.

Before Christmas, popcorn strings were made for the Christmas tree. Mother sat on the floor with the boys and helped them string the corn. There was no light in the sitting room except the glow from the burning logs, and as they sat before the fire and talked over the plans for Christmas, the strings grew longer and longer.

AFTER SUPPER

They planned the decorations for the tree, which was always a cedar. They discussed holly and ivy and mistletoe. Peter knew where there was a fine bunch of mistletoe which he had seen in the fall when the boys were gathering nuts. As they talked the strings of popcorn lengthened into yards and yards of whiteness.



Some evenings, after Mother had been down town during the day, they roasted marshmallows on long twigs held over the fire. Sprouts from peach or willow trees were best for this purpose. The marshmallows were put on the end of the twigs and kept over the fire until they puffed up and browned all over the outside.

Days on the farm began early, and were full of enough varied tasks to tire even David and Peter. The boys did not stay up very late, and after they had put sufficient wood on the fire for the night and had covered it with ashes they slid into bed and were asleep almost as soon as they had drawn the covers up over their ears.



VII

MAPLE SUGAR AND SORGHUM MOLASSES

FATHER told the boys stories about his experiences as a boy on a farm down in Green County. His grandfather had bought land from the Indians and built a house on it. The house was built of logs and had large stone chimneys and broad fireplaces made of rocks and chinked with clay. In the kitchen there was a fireplace with cranes and a brick oven. On the farm there was a grove of fine old sugar maples which was called a sugar orchard. When the farm was cleared these old maples were left standing.

Just as David and Peter were helping with the

MAPLE SUGAR

work on the farm so Father had helped Grandfather and had learned to do all the things which farmers had, in those days, to do. He had seen his mother, David and Peter's grandmother, spin linen and woolen thread and yarn. The flax had to be rotted and hackled before it could be spun. The wool was washed, carded, and spun into thread and yarn. Father could remember gathering the dry seedpods of teasel to be used for carding before a steel card was used. Teasel was sometimes called card thistle because it had been used in this way.

Father had helped Grandmother twist candle wicking and he had cut many pine splinters for candle wood to be used instead of wicks. David and Peter had seen the candle molds in the smoke house and thought that they would like to try to make candles themselves. Father promised to help them make some molded candles and also show them how to make dip candles which went through quite a different process. All the things which Father told them about his life as a boy sounded very interesting, but when, one evening late in winter, he described the way maple sugar used to be made down in the country, David and Peter insisted that he must help them to make it.

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"We have plenty of maples here on the place to give us some sugar," Peter said.

"Yes," answered Father, "you're right. There are over twenty fine sugar trees here and if the weather is right for a good run of sap you should get several gallons of syrup and some sugar out of them."

"Who first thought of making maple sugar?" David asked.

"Like a great many discoveries," his father replied, "it was probably accidental. Maple sugar is one of the things which the Indians gave to the white man. Long before the early colonists came to this country and made their way across the mountains to settle here, the Indians knew how to gather the sap from maple trees, boil it down and make syrup and sugar. In the early days white sugar was very rare and maple sugar and sorghum were used for all the sweetening in baking and cooking. There are still families back in the mountains who never have white sugar. Nowadays they use mostly sorghum molasses and they call it 'long sweetnin'.' White sugar is called 'short sweetnin'.'"

"Sorghum molasses is made of sap from the sorghum cane. The sap is pressed out of the cane in a sorghum mill. The cane is fed into the mill



A SUGAR CAMP

MAPLE SUGAR

between two metal cylinders placed in upright position and revolving in opposite directions. There is a cog wheel at the top of each cylinder. The cogs of these two wheels fit into the cogs of two other wheels, one of which is fastened to an iron shaft that stands upright and has a long pole fastened to it. A horse is hitched to the other end of the pole and driven in a circle around the mill. Someone has to keep the horse going and a boy usually sits bareback on him, guiding him with a halter and whipping him up with a piece of sorghum cane when he stops.

“The sap flows out of the cane as it is crushed between the two rollers. It drips into a trough below and runs into a bucket placed at the lower end of the trough. Near the mill there is always a sugar camp.

“On your grandfather’s farm the sugar camp where the sap was boiled down was used for making both sorghum molasses and maple sugar. It was just a crude furnace made of flat rocks piled on top of each other and daubed with clay. At one end there was a fire and over it there was a rough shed of rived boards to shed rain water when the weather was bad. Three iron kettles were placed on the open top and chinked around with clay to keep the heat from spreading.

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Kettles are no longer used. Flat pans or evaporators have taken their place. Some people used to swing the kettles from a rail by iron chains. The fires were kept burning until the cooking was finished."

"Did you make sorghum sugar, too?"

"No. Sorghum will not sugar because of the large amount of glucose in it."

"Could we build a sugar camp when we make sugar?" asked Peter.

"You would have a hard time finding enough rock around here to make it," Father replied, "and since you are not going to make maple sugar in any great quantities you would do much better to cook the sap down in the kitchen. You and David can split and carry the wood and tend the fire. Blanche and Mother can help you with the cooking."

David and Peter watched the weather and asked Uncle Jerry what he thought about it.

"Well," said Jerry, "ye never kin tell, but I reckon it's goin' to be an early spring."

He was right. Late in February the weather was just right for a good flow of sap. The days were warm enough to thaw and the nights were freezing. This alternating temperature was just what is needed to make sap flow. David and Peter

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cut large branches from elderberry bushes, pushed out the pith and made the spouts on which the buckets were to hang. They tapped the trees with a half-inch bit, making a hole about an inch and a half deep in the trunk of the maple four feet above the ground. Father said that the spouts should be wrapped with flax to make them fit tightly into the holes. Buckets were hung on these spouts to catch the sap as it flowed out.



The boys collected the sap in the morning before they went to school and again in the afternoon when they came home. Blanche boiled it down in small quantities in the afternoon and evening. David and Peter took their books into the kitchen and did their studying there, so they could be sure of seeing the whole sugar-making process.

When they went around in the morning to collect the sap there would be icicles on the spouts if the night had been cold enough. The ends of the icicles had pale yellow tips on them.

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These yellow tips were sweet and the boys broke them off and ate them. They called them "sugar tips."

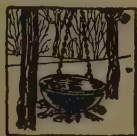
Most of the sap flowed before noon, and after the boys had gone to school Jerry kept an eye on the buckets to see that they did not run over. If the nights were warm the sap continued to flow. The run lasted for more than three weeks and sugar making was so interesting that the boys never stopped gathering the sap until the end came.

The sugar which was to be caked was boiled down in separate pans. After it had been reduced almost enough to pour, it required constant attention to avoid boiling over. While it was boiling it was stirred to keep it from scorching. The density was judged by the size of the bubbles rising to the top. As the sugar thickened the bubbles grew smaller. Then it was tested by dipping up a spoonful and pouring it back into the kettle. If the syrup was so thick that it ran slowly it was poured into molds and left to harden. The cakes of maple sugar were then wrapped in wax paper and put away.

There came a few days of very cold weather just at this time and the boys hoped that there would be snow, for Father had told them how to

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make waxed sugar and said that snow was essential to "sugaring off," as the process was called. So Peter and David were delighted when, after two days of cloudy, threatening weather, the temperature dropped and instead of rain there was snow, giving them the chance to make "wax." They filled a baking pan with snow, packing it down, and left the pan out-of-doors. When the syrup was boiled down thick it was taken outside and poured over the snow. Instead of granulating it formed a sheet of transparent candy. As soon as it had cooled it was taken into the house and eaten.



The maple sugar, which had been wrapped in paper, was kept on a shelf in the pantry while the syrup was sealed up in jars and put on a shelf in the darkest corner of the cellar, to be used for candy making, cake icing, maple ice cream, and to eat with griddle cakes for breakfast. David and Peter sold some of the sugar and the syrup the next fall to a few people who were glad to get homemade maple products.



VIII

SPRING GREENS

MARCH came in like a lion and went out like a lamb. The first part of the month was cold and blustery. At night, when Peter and David played by the sitting-room fire, the wind howled down the chimney and moaned around the corners of the house. There was some snow and a lot of rain. Toward the end of the month the wind veered to the west and south-west and subsided into breezes. One morning Peter saw a bluebird hopping from branch to branch on a plum tree down in the fruit garden. The same morning, Uncle Jerry, when he came, brought a piece of red sassafras root with him and gave it to Mother.

SPRING GREENS

"Margaret said I was to fetch this sassafras along an' give hit to ye," Jerry explained. "Seems like spring's here a'ready an' folks needs a tonic fer thinnin' the blood 'fore hot weather comes. This sass'fras was dug in January. Hit's been layin' on the mantel shelf dryin' fer near two months."

Margaret was always gathering herbs and berries and roots which she used to make teas, brews, and poultices. She knew a great many remedies for various ills. When David had a stone-bruise on his heel and was in much pain, Margaret heard of it from Jerry.

"Hit's a burnin' shame fer that little feller to suffer. I'll jest go over an' make a poultice fer him," she said.

She came and looked at the stone-bruise. "Honey, what 'at needs is some madeira leaves," she said.

She took some of the leaves from the vine and crushed them in the palms of her hands. Then she put the crushed leaves on the swelling and wrapped the heel in bandages.

"Will it have to be lanced?" David asked rather anxiously.

"No, indeed," Margaret answered. "Jest keep changin' the leaves once or twice a day. Them

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leaves 'll draw all the fever out an' hit'll break all by itself."

David's stone-bruise got well and, thanks to Margaret's poultices, did not have to be lanced.

Margaret's sassafras and the bluebirds were unmistakable indications of spring. And, of course, spring meant kites. On the way to school David, Peter, and Charles discussed them. David did not care a great deal how his kite looked so long as it flew well. Charles and Peter thought they would make box kites and cover them with cloth.

"I'm goin' to make my kite of paper," David announced, "with three cross sticks. It'll fly just as well as your box kites. You can't put a tail on a box kite an' I like a tail on my kite. I'll ask Mother for some rags an' make a red an' white tail. Won't it look fine with its red an' white tail waggin' when it gets 'way up in the air?"

"Do ye know how to bridle a kite?" Charles asked.

"Yes," David answered, "all it needs is two strings fastened to the sticks at the top an' at the bottom. Just tie the strings together a little above the middle of the kite an' fasten the cord to that."

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"Be sure you don't get the bridle too short," Peter said. "The tail is important, too. It mustn't be too long or too short. If it's too long it pulls the kite down. If it's too short the kite just zig-zags around and comes down on the ground bottom side up."

"We have to use good, strong string for ours," Charles remarked. "Box kites can pull somethin' terrible. I heard 'bout a boy was pulled plumb off his feet by a box kite, once."

The three boys fell into an argument as to whether or not a kite could really lift someone off the ground if there were a strong wind blowing.

"Whoop-ee!" David shouted, "just think of sailin' away, holdin' on to one end of a kite string."

"Yes, just think of landing in a blackberry patch, too," was Peter's observation.

"Aw, why spoil it with your old blackberry briars?" David said.

"Well, land in a feather bed, if you want to," Peter said, and then added, "but it won't happen, anyway."

The boys made their kites and flew them. Peter's kite got caught in the branches of a tree when he sent it up one day. It was so badly

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wrecked that it was not worth repairing. He made another kite which flew better than the first.

There were days of rain alternating with clear, bright days. Spring advanced, bringing more warmth with it. The bluebirds went farther north and crocuses began to show here and there on the lawn. A scarlet tanager flashed through the trees and a few dandelions came out to greet the sun. The leaf buds on all the trees began to swell. In the fruit garden the peach trees shook out their pink blossoms and scattered the petals on the ground in every breeze.

"Look at them fool peaches," Jerry said, "ef hit comes a late frost they'll *all* be killed."

There was no late frost to kill the peaches that year. Jerry began to clear the garden of dead plants and leaves. He piled them all together and made a bonfire in the middle of the garden. David was clearing his popcorn patch and piling the stalks on the fire.

"Can't somethin' be done 'bout all the mornin' glories?" he asked

"Nothin' 'cept pull 'em up soon as ye see 'em," Jerry said, "they're an awful pest."

"Seems like the more I pull up the faster they come," David said.

SPRING GREENS

Peter came into the garden from the barnyard. As he walked along by the fence he noticed that the rhubarb was beginning to show its leaves. He told Blanche, when he went back to the house, that the pie-plant would soon be ready to cut. Now he walked over to where Jerry was piling stalks and leaves on the fire.

"Look at that," Peter said, as he dug into the ground with the toe of his shoe. "The moles are rootin' all over the place. I've tried to catch 'em but they always get away."

"Ef ye ketch one be careful," Jerry said. "They're blind as bats but they sure can bite."

"O' course they're blind. But they can find the seeds in the ground after we've planted them. I saw Bo catch a mole once." Bo was one of the cats. He was old and a good hunter. "He was in the backyard one mornin', just standin' an' lookin' at the ground. I stopped and watched him 'cause I knew he had his eye on some-thin'. He was watchin' a mole hill. All at once Bo jumped at the mole hill an' stuck his paw into the ground. He scratched an' pawed at the earth an' then he pulled the mole out. Mr. Mole tried to get away but Bo never gave him a chance. After the mole was dead I looked at him. He had a nose like a pig, funny, flat feet,

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an' no eyes. Besides that he had a very bad odor. I suppose Bo won't eat moles because they smell so badly."

"At's right. Dogs an' cats don't eat moles 'cause they're so evil-smellin'," Jerry answered.

David came over to the fire with an armful of corn stalks. After he had put them on the fire, he turned to Peter and Jerry. "I'm goin' to raise some goobers 'ith my corn this summer. I'll plant the popcorn an' between the rows I'll plant hills o' peanuts."

"I'll stick to corn an' melons," Peter replied. "Blanche said she was goin' to gather pot greens this morning an' I'm goin' to help her."

"There should be some meadow violets down in the field by the limestone spring," David said.

"If they're in bloom I'll gather a bunch. We're goin' down there to get cress for the greens," and Peter turned and started for the house.

He went through the garden gate into the woodyard. As he opened the gate he saw a chipmunk sitting on a log of wood and looking at him. The gate closed with a bang which frightened the chipmunk. He disappeared into a pile of wood.

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"Be careful, little Shiny-Eyes," Peter said to the chipmunk as he whisked away. "If Bo sees you it'll be your finish."

Blanche had just got the breakfast dishes washed when Peter came into the kitchen.

"Are you ready, Blanche?" Peter asked.

"Jest about," Blanche answered. "Git a butcher knife an' a dish pan. I'll put my bonnet on an' we'll go."

As they crossed the backyard Blanche said, "We kin git all the dandelions we want right here in the yard. Back o' the smoke house there's a heap o' narrow dock. Keep yer eye peeled fer sorrel an' wild mustard. You can't have a pot o' greens 'ithout a little o' everythin' that comes along in the spring. Later on you kin have yer fill o' garden truck 'at lasts all summer. Hit's only in the spring when things air young an' fresh 'at you can have a good mess o' greens. 'Tain't no use tryin' to raise 'em in the garden. They're only fit to eat when they first shoot up. Folks 'at go huntin' greens after they've begun to bud air wastin' their time."

They went down the lane from the barnyard to the creek and crossed the foot log. Peter let down one of the bars in the fence and crawled through the opening. Blanche was interested in

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her subject and continued to hold forth on boiled greens.

"Now, there's poke. Hit comes later. Nothin's better 'an a good mess o' poke. Hit's got to be young an' tender, not more'n a foot high. If hit's too old it has a strong taste. Take it when hit's right an' nothin's nicer."

They had to walk around a marshy place which covered about a half acre near the spring. On the far side of the marsh near the spring was where the meadow violets grew. In this rich, moist ground they grew to be as large as Johnny-jump-ups. Here they were of a much deeper hue than the violets which grew in dryer soil, and had soft, velvety petals. The marsh was overgrown with cat-tails, rushes, and jewel-weed. It was a favorite haunt for meadow larks.

"Caw-caw-caw," a crow called from a willow tree on the bank of the creek.

"There's Mr. Crow," Blanche said. "He's waitin' fer some corn. Soon as ye plant yer corn he'll come right along an' dig hit up. Crows're the peskiest birds alive."

"They had a nest in that tree last summer," Peter said. "It was a poor sort of a nest, too, nothin' but a lot o' sticks piled together."

"Did ye ever see a pet crow?" Blanche asked.



BLANCHE LIFTED THE CRESS FROM THE WATER

SPRING GREENS

"No," answered Peter

"I knew a boy who had one," she went on. "It was a right nice pet but full o' meanness. What do ye think he'd do? Whenever he got a chance he'd steal somethin'. Jest anythin' lyin' around loose he'd take an' hide, if he could carry hit. Once he took a teaspoon. When they found where he'd hid it they found all kinds o' other things, too, that had been missin'."

"Father says if crows have their tongues split, they'll learn to talk."

"That's right. I've heard tell o' how they could learn to call people by name," Blanche said.

They reached the other side of the marsh and found the violets already beginning to bloom. The water cress was growing in a solid bed of green in the spring branch. It had not yet come up out of the water and was tender and crisp. Blanche reached into the water with her knife and began to cut the cress in large bunches and drop it into the pan.

"Ain't hit pretty?" she asked as she held up a bunch for Peter to see. "I never seen a nicer bed o' water cress."

"Yes," said Peter, "it certainly looks good. In a few weeks somebody'll have to clear it out,

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though. It grows so thick it'll choke up the stream."

Peter had been gathering violets, and when he finished making a bunch, he tied the stems together with a blade of grass.



"Guess that'll be 'bout enough," Blanche remarked, as she rose from the ground and picked up the dish pan. "Now, let's find some other things to put with this."

They wandered through the field and crossed the creek again. As they passed the spring house Peter dropped the bunch of violets into the spring. They gathered dandelions in the backyard. There was one part of the yard which was so thickly covered with them that the grass hardly showed. The yellow, short-stemmed blossoms were scattered over the ground. Later, when they went to seed, the stems would shoot up eight or ten inches high and there would be balls of silvery white down at the top.

Blanche and Peter gathered narrow dock back of the smoke house. Then they went to the fruit

SPRING GREENS

garden to look for sorrel, wild mustard, and pepper grass. The sorrel grew chiefly in well-shaded places: under bushes and on the sunless side of fences, in deep grass. Here and there they found it, clumps of tender green leaves on long stems. The leaves were divided into three parts like clover leaves. The flowers were a delicate pink and grew on long stems like the leaves. Peter and Blanche ate the flowers and buds with their stems and put the leaves into the pan with the other greens. In the patch where sweet potatoes had been planted they found lots of wild mustard and pepper grass growing among the dead potato vines.

The dish pan was now piled full and Blanche said that they had enough for "a mess o' greens." They went back to the spring house where Blanche washed and sorted the greens before she cooked them. Peter took the violets, which had stayed fresh in the cool water, and shook the moisture off them. Then he went into the house and gave them to his mother.

"The first violets," Mother said, as she took the bunch. "In a little while you can go looking for May apple blossoms and anemones."



IX

GARDENS

CHARLES and Peter sat on the frame of a hotbed. Peter was pulling weeds as they talked. After he had weeded the hotbed he intended to transplant some tomato and some cabbage plants into the cold frames.

"Yer tomato plants are doin' mighty fine," Charles observed. "Hotbeds help a heap in bringin' 'em on early."

"Jerry made these beds," Peter answered. "He dug the pits four feet deep an' walled the sides with boards. He put manure in the bottom an' then filled them up with dirt, made the frame around the top to box them in, an' fitted glass frames on top. I banked the dirt around the



A HOTBED

GARDENS

outside an' tacked on the strips of cloth to make the frames weathertight. I sure have got a lot of plants here. I'll give you some tomato an' some cabbage plants for your garden."

"Soon as ye git yer tomatoes an' cabbages transplanted ye kin start yer sweet potatoes."

"Plenty o' time for them, yet," Peter said. "I've got to transplant these, an' in the other hotbed are bell-pepper plants an' celery an' okra. Just wait till you see my garden this year. Im goin' to have bunch beans an' beets an' cucumbers, onions, lettuce, an' melons. Last year I had cucumbers an' muskmelons an' onions in that little patch back o' the barn. You can't raise muskmelons or cantaloupes an' cucumbers in the same patch. It spoils the melons 'cause they always mix."

"Why don't ye plant yer cantaloupes an' watermelons here in the fruit garden? Plant a heap o' watermelons. I'm goin' to plant watermelons, too. Golly! ain't they good when they're nice an' cold? When they're ripe ye stick a knife in 'em an' they jist split open when ye pull the knife through 'em."

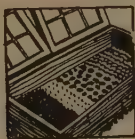
"I'd like to have so many watermelons that we could just eat the heart an' give the rest to the chickens an' pigs," Peter said.

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"Are ye goin' to have any white watermelons?" Charles asked.

"No," Peter answered, "they look sort o' sickly when they're cut an' the meat is kind o' yellow instead o' red. It'll be a long time before I have any melons, though."

"How are yer strawberry plants?"



"Fine," said Peter. "As soon as I get enough o' these starts transplanted to clear out one o' the hotbeds, I'm goin' to put some old strawberry plants in here. The berries'll get ripe a month earlier if I do that an' I'll have room to put some o' the new plants in the rows where I take out the old ones. It's no use lettin' strawberry plants run wild. If the runners are cut after they take root an' the old plants are dug out after the second year so new ones can be planted you'll always have good berries. They ought to be worked, too, just like anything else."

"Yes, indeed," Charles said, "berries take a heap o' care if ye expect to git anything from 'em. Now, blackberries an' raspberries have to

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be cut out every second year or they stop bearin'. When're ye goin' to trim yer grapevines?"

"These vines here near the gate don't have to be trimmed. They're Niagaras, but the others, the Delawares and Concords, have already been trimmed. Did you see the one I grafted? I got a wild grapevine in the orchard over there by the big tulip tree. I cut it off about six inches above the ground an' dug it up with all the roots. After it was transplanted I put two grafts on it. One was a Concord and the other was a Delaware."

"How'd ye make yer graft?" Charles asked.

"Well, I took some stock a year old from the Delaware an' Concord vines an' cut the ends off but left two buds on each piece. Then I split the trunk o' the wild stock. You must make a good, smooth cut when you split it or the grafts won't fit right. The lower ends of the branches have to be cut wedge shape an' fitted into the split in the old stock. After that, all you have to do is cover the split part an' the cut ends with graftin' wax. This vine will bear grapes this fall, two kinds on one vine."

"I tried buddin' an' graftin' on some fruit trees. The buds didn't do so well. Only two or three o' them grew. Buddin' is all right on peaches an' plums an' apricots," Charles said.

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"How did you bud your trees?" Peter asked.

"That's easy," Charles replied. "I jist took the buds off o' one tree an' put 'em on another. If ye know somebody 'at has a good peach tree or plum tree, git some o' the buds from 'em. Cut a square o' bark 'round a bud an' lift it off o' the wood. Ye have to be sure an' take all the inside bark right down to the wood. Then ye make two cuts crosswise in the bark o' yer tree an' lift up the bark at the corners so ye can slip the bud under it. Cover the edges with graftin' wax an' tie the bark down good an' tight with string wrapped 'round the branch. Buds are slower 'an grafts but they'll bear just as good in time."



When Peter had finished transplanting the cabbage and tomato plants he made up his mind to follow Charles's suggestion and put his melons in the fruit garden. But David decided to plant his popcorn where Peter was planting melons.

"If the cucumbers spoil your cantaloupes Jerry's sweet corn'll spoil my popcorn. You

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can take my corn patch for your tomatoes," David told Peter.

"All right," Peter said, "then you can help take care o' the melons, too. When you work your corn you can just put your hoe over here in the melon patch once in a while."

"You're awful good to me, aren't you? Who said I wanted to work your old melons?"

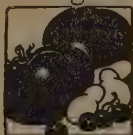
"You can eat as much melon as anybody," Peter retorted. "I'd think you could help weed the melon patch sometimes!"

"Maybe I will," David said in a casual tone. He had no intention of doing it if he could get out of it. David disliked weeds more than anything else, but his dislike was not strong enough to make him pull them unless he had to. He kept his corn patch clean, but his hoe never strayed to a row of beets or potatoes unless he got a good deal of encouragement from Father.

Peter had selected the seeds for his tomatoes and dried them himself. Only the finest tomatoes had been selected, large ones of good color, smooth, and with no ridges on them. The meat had to be thick and firm with very small seed sections. Those with many seeds were considered very poor. Tomatoes were usually eaten raw with sugar, vinegar, salt, and pepper on them. A bowl

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of fresh, sliced tomatoes was on the table at every meal. Sometimes they were not touched but they were always there as long as the season lasted.



Peter left his tomato plants in the cold frames until they were over a foot high. Then he planted them in the garden. He planted them far apart and put a stake beside each one. When they started to branch he pinched off the buds. This kept the strength of the plants in the main stalk. If the plants had been allowed to spread and branch the fruit would have been smaller.

The first frost killed the tomato plants if they were left out uncovered. Peter pulled his vines up with all the green tomatoes on them and hung them in the cellar just before the heavy frost came in the fall. The green tomatoes ripened slowly in the cellar and every few days Peter took some and placed them in the kitchen window where the sun could shine on them and ripen them more quickly. There were fresh tomatoes for nearly two months after the frost had blighted the garden because the vines had been pulled up and put in the cellar.

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The tomatoes which were not pulled before the frost were used to make pickles and green-tomato preserves.

Besides the tomatoes raised for the table there were the cherry tomatoes and the pear tomatoes. The cherry tomatoes were small and grew in clusters of bright red. The pear tomatoes were either red or yellow and about the size of a seckle pear but shaped more like a Bartlett. They were used for preserving.

For days at a time, during the summer, David and Peter would not touch tomatoes at the table, but in the afternoon they went to the barn and got some salt out of the salt bag in the feed room. Then they went to the garden and picked ripe tomatoes, broke them open, and ate them with the salt. They always seemed to taste different and better that way. Tomatoes which were broken instead of cut had quite another flavor.

The sweet-potato vines were transplanted from the hotbed to a patch in the fruit garden. This garden sloped down toward the pasture at the lower side. The rows were made in ridges sloping down hill so the water could drain off and run away. Late one afternoon Peter pulled the sets up and put them into a can of water to

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keep them fresh. He and Jerry planted them, making holes in the ground with a stick, putting a potato vine into each hole and then pressing the soil around the vine with their hands. When they had finished planting they watered all the vines.

Irish potatoes were planted quite differently from sweet potatoes. The white potatoes were cut into pieces, with one or two eyes in each piece. Two or three pieces were dropped together into long furrows running the length of the patch. They were covered up in hills. As soon as the clusters of white flowers at the tops of the vines were in full bloom the new potatoes were ready to be dug. In digging new potatoes the vines were not disturbed. The earth was taken away from the side of the hill and some potatoes removed, then the hill was covered again so that the potatoes left in it could continue to grow.

The first potatoes were ready just when the first green peas were large enough to gather. New potatoes and green peas were cooked and served together. Before the peas were gone the bunch beans were ready to be used. The pole beans were stuck with long poles which gave them a support to climb on. They matured before the bunch beans were gone.

One afternoon David, Charles, and Peter hur-

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ried to the barn just as the first big drops of a thunderstorm began to fall. All day long heavy, white thunder caps had been lying along the horizon and in the afternoon they rolled across the sky. The barn swallows flew low over the ground in the barnyard, much to Bo's annoyance, because they were far too swift for him to catch them as they darted over his head.

"Hit sure is goin' to pour 'fore sundown," Charles remarked as he watched the swallows wheeling about. "When they fly low like that hit's a sure sign o' rain."

As the boys entered the barn there was a flash of "streak lightning" and a clap of thunder. The rain descended in torrents as if it had been poured from a water spout.

"Let's go up in the haymow," Peter suggested.

"Jerry says hay draws lightnin'," David objected.

"Stay where you are if you're afraid," Peter said, and started to climb the ladder to the haymow. "Come on, Charles."

David followed the other two boys up the ladder. Part of the hayloft had been cleared out and they could look through the wide cracks to the ground below. Just as they reached the hay there

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was a terrific thunder clap which seemed to go rolling off into the distance. The rain came down with increased vigor. It was very dark in the hay-loft with only a small window in each end under the eaves. The thunder rolled away and the rain made an awful clatter as it hit the shingles of the roof. There was a flash of lightning, the thunder crashed again overhead and sounded as if it had split the whole sky in two. Bang! Something hit the barn with a terrible crash.

"What's 'at?" Peter exclaimed

"Didn't I tell you . . ." David began, but got no further before a second something thumped the roof.

"Hail," said Charles after the second stone hit the roof.

"Come on," he cried, as he climbed up to look out of the window.

The hailstones were rattling like buckshot. The boys looked out of the window and saw them bouncing as they struck the ground.

"Whee-ee-ee! look at it," David shouted as he hung on to the edge of the window and bounced up and down in the hay. "Great jumping snakes, did you ever see anything like it?"

"When it stops rainin' ye better go look at yer gardens," Charles said.

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"What do you mean?" David asked.

"He means," Peter answered, "that if it keeps on hailing everything in the garden 'll be ruined: not only the garden, the orchard, too."

The hail stopped but the rain continued for several minutes. The air had become much cooler because of the hail which had fallen. When it stopped raining the boys climbed down and went outside. They gathered up handfuls of hailstones. Some of them were as large as hens' eggs. They wiped the dirt off the stones and sucked them.

"It tastes like snow," David observed

"Sure it does," Peter said. "It's the same thing, only this is in lumps and snow is in flakes."



In the garden the boys found that little damage had been done. Some leaves had been stripped off the stems and a few tomatoe and pepper plants had been snipped off by the falling stones.

The clouds began to break overhead and patches of blue showed through the gray.

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"Let's go to the house and see what Blanche has to eat," David suggested.

As they entered the backyard a catbird, which had been soaked in the rain, hopped about on some honeysuckle vines and gave his cat call. Outside the kitchen David stuck his nose in the air and sniffed.

"Fresh bread," he said. "Can't you smell it?"

They wiped their feet on the grass before they went up the steps. At the door they wiped them again on a tow sack.

"What you got to eat, Blanche?" Peter asked.

"Yer jest in time," Blanche answered. "I jest turned out a pan o' cinnamon rolls an' ye kin each have one."

"I want a corner one with lots o' sticky on the bottom," David said.

"Everybody does," Blanche answered. "Here, ye kin all have corner ones seein' as how there's four corners in a pan an' only three o' ye. What did the hail do to the garden?"

"Not much," Peter answered. "It just stripped off some leaves an' a few tomatoes an' peppers."

"I've seen it hail so hard hit destroyed whole gardens an' orchards," Blanche told them. "Where were ye when hit began?"

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"In the barn," said Peter. "When the first hailstone hit the roof Davy thought he'd been struck by lightnin'."

"Did hit skeer ye, Davy?" Blanche asked, laughing.

"Naw," David said. "D'you think I'm afraid o' hail?"

"Might as well be," Blanche asserted. "It sure kin knock ye silly if one o' 'em big stones hits ye square on the head."

"Look out yonder," Charles said, pointing through the kitchen door, "that's the way hit always looks at sundown after a thunder-storm."

They all looked out through the open door. The lawn, the trees, the garden, and the orchard in the distance, back of the garden, were bathed in an amber light. All the greens in the landscape had become brighter and appeared lighter in hue than they had during the day.

"To-morrow'll be a pretty day," Blanche said as she looked at the western horizon. "Red at sunset is a sure sign o' good weather."

The sun had sunk below the western hills, leaving behind it a thin, clear glow of pale yellow in the sky. Against this stretched long, thin strands of red clouds which grew thinner and

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redder as the last rays shot through them, making an aureole.

"Did ye see the rainbow awhile ago?" Blanche asked. "Hit 'as over there in the meadow. 'A rainbow at night is the sailor's delight,'" she quoted.

"Why didn't you look for the pot o' gold?" Peter asked.

"Stop askin' fool questions," Blanche said, "and run along an' do yer chores before hit gits dark. An' don't keep supper back 'cause hit's Saturday night an' ye got to take yer bath after supper an' git spruced up fer to-morrow."

The three boys went out with their cinnamon rolls—or what remained of them.

"Let's go wadin' in the creek," Peter suggested.

"All right, let's," David answered.

They rolled up their overalls as high as they could get them above their knees and went down the lane to the creek.

"It's runnin' all over creation," David said as he looked at the creek.

It had overflowed its banks and the muddy yellow water spread across the meadow like a lake. The water which ran down from the surrounding hills could not be carried off fast

GARDENS

enough by the small stream. A sudden downpour always inundated the meadows through which the creek flowed.

The boys ran barefooted down the lane to the water.

"I found a snail," said David as he leaned over to look at something in the grass by the fence.

"That's not a snail," Peter said, "it's just a slug. Snails have shells to crawl into. Slugs just crawl around all naked."

"They're no good for anythin'," Charles said, "but they don't do no harm."

The boys waded around in the water which had overflowed. They stood on the foot log and measured the depth of the creek with sticks. Soon they grew tired of splashing about in the water. Just as they decided to leave, David, who was standing on the foot log, lost his balance and fell into the stream up to his armpits. Charles and Peter pulled him out.

"Mother'll be pleased when she sees what a sight you've made of yourself," Peter remarked.

"She won't care," David replied. "You don't suppose I did it on purpose, do you? Nobody *wants* to get his mouth full o' muddy water."

He ran to the house to put on dry clothes. Charles and Peter walked up the lane.

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"I'll have to work now," Peter remarked. "Weeds don't lose much time after a rain. There's enough pusley in the fruit garden to plant the whole county. It's the meanest thing in the world to get rid of. All you have to do with most weeds is to dig 'em up or pull 'em up an' that's the end of 'em. Pusley's not like that. If you leave any of the root or just a little branch that's broken off, lying on the ground, it starts to grow again."

"'Poor John' is what they call hit," Charles said, "an hit's a good name, too. It'll grow in sand or clay just as quick as hit will in good soil."

"Jimson-weed is something else 'at nobody likes. It doesn't seem to do any harm, though, an' it likes poor soil. It's kind o' pretty, too, with the big white flowers like morning glories. When it goes to seed it's fun to shake the black seeds out o' the pods as they split open," Peter said.



"I reckon ye could find a use fer every weed if ye only knew how," Charles said. "There's tansy an' fennel, an' boneset an' everlastin',

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an' nightshade an' a heap o' others kin be used fer medicine. Some air good fer one thing an' some fer another."

"Aunt Margaret knows 'em all," Peter said with conviction. "She's always picking a handful of something or other wherever she goes. You can't have an ailment that she doesn't know how to treat it. She's got Indian blood in her, that's how she comes to know about such things."

"I got to go home an' do my work," Charles said. "Good-bye."

"Good-bye," Peter answered. He went to the spring house and got the milk buckets. It was time to do the milking.

Peter and Uncle Jerry spent most of their time during the spring and early summer in the garden. When Peter wanted advice about the fertilizing or cultivating of his plants he went to Father or Uncle Jerry for it. They always had a solution for any problem which he presented.

Later in the summer the gardens did not require so much attention, but there was never a day that Peter did not look over them to make sure that they were kept in proper order. He went through the gardens, straightening a bean pole here and there, where the weight of the vines or the wind had dragged it down. The toma-

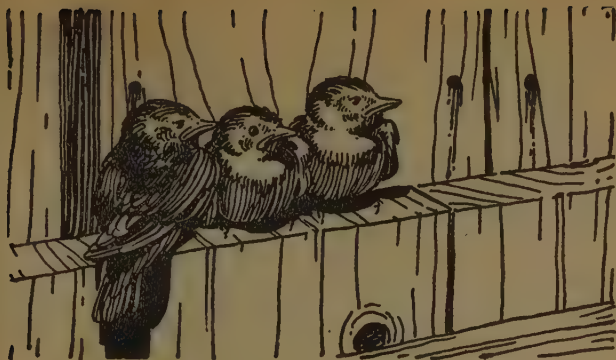
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toes were his special interest. He never failed to find a shoot which needed trimming, a tomato worm which had to be removed or a vine which had to be tied to a stake at the top. He usually picked and ate a tomato while he was in the patch.

As Peter went from one plant to another, lifting the large, smooth fruit on its stem, looking at the color, judging the weight and running his fingers over the smooth skin, he developed a thirst. It was a thirst which only the juicy sourness of a tomato could satisfy. Slowly he twisted a red, ripe tomato from its stem and broke it open. The meat was firm and red, the seeds, which were in small sections, did not spurt out as he broke it apart. The juice did not drip from the edges where the tomato had been torn. The meaty part had a moist, mealy appearance. They were good tomatoes.

From April to October, when Peter had nothing else to do, he could always find a small chore in the garden.





X

BIRDS

DAVID was lying on the ground under a maple, looking up into the leafy branches of the tree. On the tip of one of the top-most branches an oriole had suspended her nest. High up, out of the way of all danger, she had fastened some string, hair, and grass to a swaying branch. She had hung the nest on these first few strands and woven a deep pocket of more grass, horsehair, bits of cloth and string, which she had been able to gather together from the barnyard, garden, and lawn. The entrance was near the top of the pocket, and at the bottom was the nest proper, lined with feathers and wool, picked up here and there about the farm.

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David lay and watched the birds as they flew back and forth with bits of material for finishing their nest. All at once he burst into song, shouting at the top of his voice:

“Rock-a-bye, baby, in the tree top.”

He did not see or hear Peter, who was approaching him across the lawn.

“Have you gone stark crazy?” Peter asked as he came nearer David.

“Naw, I’m not crazy,” David answered, “I was just singin’ to those hangin’ birds up there. I thought they might like to learn a new song to sing to their babies.” And he pointed at the nest from where he was lying.



Peter looked up through the branches and saw the nest swinging on the end of a limb.

“Look at the male bird,” he said. “He’s all dressed up in yellow an’ black. Isn’t he pretty? His wife isn’t so dressy. She just has dull, yellow-green feathers. It’s funny how the male birds always get the brightest feathers.”

While they watched the oriole’s nest a yellow-

BIRDS

hammer could be heard pounding at the bark of an old apple tree in the fruit garden. Every year a family of yellow-hammers made their nest in a hole in an apple tree growing in the garden. The birds had dug the hole with their strong beaks in a rotten part of the tree where a limb had blown off. At the bottom of the hole they had made their nest and there the mother flicker laid her eggs and hatched out her hungry little brood.



The trees in the orchard were fluffy with pink and white blossoms. Bees buzzed among the flowers and robins hopped from branch to branch or ran along the ground looking for worms and insects. In the morning when Peter went to the garden he found that the robins were already there, pecking at the moist earth, cocking their heads on one side and emitting a little, hoarse note of surprise as Peter approached. If they were frightened they rose from the ground with a short, sharp note. After the blue-green eggs in the nest, fastened in the crotch of a limb on an old apple tree, had hatched into fuzzy little

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birds, both Robin Redbreast and his plain little wife were busy all day long trying to fill their gaping mouths. Long before David and Peter were awake the robin had sung his morning song to the glow in the eastern sky and gone in search of food for his family.

David and Peter had found a robin's nest in the orchard when the eggs were in it. After the birds had hatched, the boys climbed the tree to look at them every day so long as they stayed in the nest. When the young robins saw one of the boys over the nest they opened their mouths and stretched their necks to be fed.

One day, when David was looking down their throats, he said, "They're all mouth; no wonder it takes all their daddy's time hunting worms for 'em. I haven't seen one with his mouth shut yet."

If the old birds saw anyone near the nest they flew about excitedly, screaming with fear and rage.

"Aw, shut up, old 'fraidy cat! Who's goin' to hurt your babies?" David said as he dropped a wriggly earthworm, which he had brought with him, into the nest. Three baby beaks closed on the worm and two baby beaks went empty.

"Three of 'em shut their mouths then,"



HE DROPPED A WORM INTO THE NEST

BIRDS

David called to Peter and Charles, who were on the ground. "Here's another," he said, as he dropped a second worm into the nest. The birds set up a clamor and snatched at the worm as it fell into their widespread mouths.

At sundown the robin sang his evening song as he hopped over the ground making a last search for food before going to bed for the night.

When dusk began to fall the humming birds came to gather the honey from the trumpet flowers which grew on the porch outside the sitting room, or from the nasturtiums in the flower bed under the sitting-room window. They came flying in a straight line until they reached the flowers. As they dipped their long, slender bills first into one flower, then another, to rob them of their honey, these tiny birds suspended themselves in the air, making a slight whirring sound as they rapidly beat the air with their wings. When they had exhausted the honey in one flower they darted lightly to another, rising and falling among the blossoms, lightly hesitating above each one, as they took the sweetness from it.

Sometimes a humming bird would rest for a moment on a twig or the stem of a leaf. He was so light that his weight hardly moved the leaf as he lighted upon its stem. He sat for an instant

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with his bill pointed upward, turning his head from side to side with a quick little movement, then darted toward a moon flower which had just opened in the cool evening air.

A humming bird had built a little nest of lichens and cobwebs in a honeysuckle vine on Grandmother's porch. Peter had looked into the nest and seen two eggs, no bigger than small white beans. The birds which hatched from these eggs were unbelievably small. They were no larger than bees when they first emerged from the eggs, and the empty shells were so small and frail that it did not seem possible that they had held even these tiny birds.

After dark the sphinx moths came to gather honey from the trumpet flowers, the moon flowers, nasturtiums, and honeysuckles. They liked all the blossoms which attracted the humming birds. These moths looked very much like the humming birds as they darted from flower to flower, hesitating above each one for a moment. David had caught one of them once but it had beaten its wings so hard that he had to let it go. It would have torn them to rags if he had tried to hold it.

A wren had come to the farm one day in April and decided to make his summer home there.

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He sat on the peak of the spring-house roof and sang a bubbling song to the spring. He sang so lustily and the notes came pouring out in such a rapid stream that he seemed to be bursting with joy. He decided to make a nest on a rafter under the roof and, before long, he was gathering twigs and bringing them to the spring house. One day he found a mate and brought her with him to show her where they would build their nest. Together they gathered straw and feathers and finished the nest. Wherever Jenny went he followed, fluttering about in a protecting way, very gay, and happy, and full of song.

When Peter or Blanche went to the spring house the wren hopped about in great alarm, crying, "Chit, chit, chit-chit," and scolding as hard as he could. With each "chit" he took a little hop and turned his head. Sometimes he flew into an awful temper and scolded loudly as he fluttered about in the rafters.

Jenny Wren laid her eggs in the nest and sat on them. After she began to sit all Peter could see of her was her beak and the end of her pert little tail above the rim of the nest. If a sparrow came near her she flew into a rage, scolding furiously until she chased him away.

When the wheat fields began to turn yellow

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with ripening grain the clear call of a bobwhite could be heard from somewhere back of the orchard.

"There's a quail's nest back there somewhere," Peter said as he whistled a "Bob, bob-white."

Peter stood still and listened. The bird answered him.

"There he is again," Charles said. "Let's go an' look for the nest."

They went through the orchard, stopping now and then to whistle and listen for the quail's answer. It seemed to come from the lower side of the wheat field near the old rail fence. They followed the fence down to the corner of the field and walked along the edge of the wheat. The corners of the rail fence were filled with a thick growth of weeds, briars, and sage grass. and there were no trees to shade the ground. Here and there the earth could be seen through the thick growth of weeds, and tangle of dew-berry and blackberry vines.

"Hit's the right sort o' place fer a quail's nest," Charles remarked.

The bobwhite was silent now. At their approach he had hidden himself. Peter and Charles sat down in some sage grass and waited. After a

BIRDS

few minutes the quail gave his call again, "Bob, bob-white," only a few feet away. They saw him sitting on the top rail of the fence.

"It's over there," Peter said.

The quail flew away when the boys stood up. They looked among the weeds growing in the fence corner. Suddenly, almost under Peter's feet, there was a whirr, and the mother quail flew away in a curved line over into the next field. He had not seen her, for she had been sitting on the ground, and her black, brown, and white markings were so much like the brown, dead leaves and weed stalks which covered the earth around the nest.

"Here it is," Peter cried as he bent over the nest full of small white eggs.

"Don't touch 'em," Charles exclaimed. "If ye put yer hand in a quail's nest, they won't come back and sit on hit. They're mighty shy birds. This must be the first nestful. Quails hatch two or three broods in a summer."

Peter stood silently looking at the nest. "Fifteen," he said at last. He had been counting the eggs.

"Soon as she starts to set again, Bobwhite'll look after the young ones until the second brood's old enough to fly with the first. They all stay

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close together in a covey. At night they huddle in a circle on the ground, with their tails in toward the center an' their heads pointin' out. The little ones 're the slipperiest things ye ever saw. If ye catch 'em ye can't hold 'em. They just slip through yer hand like butter."

"Look," said Peter, "there's another nest in that little cedar tree. It must be a sparrows' nest."

In the thick branches of a young cedar the sparrows had built their nest and lined it with horse hairs wound round and round. The bird had just flown off the nest. Peter looked into it and saw five green-blue eggs. The mother bird came back and sat on the fence calling, "Chip, chip, chip," while Peter and Charles looked at the nest. Peter whistled her call and she answered him.

"Sparrows're jest as tame as can be," Charles said. "Sometimes when I'm goin' along the road an' see one o' 'em I whistle to it an' it always answers. They sort o' seem to like company 'cause they fly near ye as ye walk along and light every few feet on the ground or on a bush. They ain't a bit afraid o' folks."

The boys left the nest and the sparrow settled down on her eggs again.

BIRDS

"These fence corners ought to be cleared out," Peter said as he looked at the thick tangle of weeds, in which grew mullein, burdock, boneset, life-everlasting, Spanish needles, poke-berry bushes and a great many other varieties.

"Have the catbird eggs hatched yet?" Charles asked.

"Yes," Peter answered. "The young ones are so big they're beginning to fly."



The catbirds had built their nest in a honeysuckle vine on the fence in the backyard. They had feasted on the strawberries and cherries in the fruit garden. While the male bird was filling himself with the cherries in the garden he sang beautifully. This, his musical song, was very different from the harsh cat-call he gave when he flew about in the honeysuckle or perched on the top of a fence post. Trim and neat he darted around the backyard and the garden, catching grasshoppers and moths. He had his bath in the watering trough back of the spring house. After his bath he always flew into the vines or bushes

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and shook himself. With his feathers ruffled he looked very untidy, but before he emerged again every feather was in place and he was once more the trim, sleek dandy of the birds.

At times large flocks of red-winged blackbirds came and settled on the ground in noisy groups. A big flock of the male birds, with shiny black coats and bright red or orange epaulettes on their shoulders, came first and lighted on the grass in a meadow. They stayed so close together that they formed a large black mass, with red and orange spots moving through it. As soon as they were on the ground they began to strut about, weaving in and out, and raising a great noise as they chattered. Soon another flock would follow the first and add to the jabber.

Often, Peter and David saw as many as six or eight flocks of birds light in one group, following each other at intervals of only a few minutes. The later flocks were formed of female birds which had no red on their wings and flew in separate groups. When they had all gathered together a terrible commotion arose from all the chattering. The male birds strutted about, stepping very high and holding their heads up. These gatherings usually lasted twenty or thirty minutes. The birds seemed to be discussing some-

BIRDS

thing which was most important to them, as they all screamed incessantly. After a few minutes a flock would fly away, then another and another, until they had all gone, leaving the meadow quiet and deserted once more.

In the spring the birds mated and, while the mother bird was nesting, the father was very watchful and concerned about the welfare of the nest. His interest did not last long, however. As soon as the young birds were old enough to fly they were left to flock with the mothers while he went back to join the flock of red-wings.

When the dandelions went to seed the lettuce birds came and feasted on the seeds. They came in flocks of hundreds and descended on the lawn. They were pretty little things, that hopped about, fluttering their wings and pecking at the seeds. The females wore a quiet coat of dull olive-green but the males were gay in black and bright canary-yellow. Some of the males were all yellow except for a little black on the wings, which could hardly be seen save when they flew.

It seemed to be the ambition of Bo's life to catch a lettuce bird. His ambition was never realized because, as soon as he came near one of the birds, they were all on the wing. They did not rise from the ground when they were startled,

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with a whirr and in great confusion, but flew, not very high, in a wavy line, rising and falling, and twittering as they flew.

David and Peter tried to catch them with traps, but the birds were much quicker than the trigger and, when the traps fell, they were always empty.

The barn swallows flew in and out of the open barn doors, coming to and going from a nest built above the driveway on one of the rafters. David spent much time lying on the bare boards of the hayloft, peering through the cracks at the nest, which was built of mud against the side of the rafter. The nest was lined with fine grasses and chicken feathers. It was built with a thick outer wall made of mud with bits of straw and hay worked into it to strengthen it. The swallows gathered the mud in pellets from the moist ground near the watering trough or beside the creek. All day long they flew in and out, sailing on outstretched wings, often with no apparent effort or motion. When they reached their nest, just before lighting, they fluttered their wings.

Peter and David, as they went to school, frequently saw rows of swallows sitting on telephone wires along the roadside. They sat with

BIRDS

their wings folded crosswise on their backs, and their long, forked tails pointing downward. Their large round eyes and short broad beaks set in tiny heads gave them rather a bewildered look.

There were birds all over the farm from early spring until late fall and a few even spent the winter there, living on seeds found on dead weeds in the field or gathering what grain they could around the barn or in the chicken yard. Peter and David put out crumbs for them during the winter, but the English sparrows usually got the greater part of the good





XI

MILK

EARLY in the morning Blanche went down to the spring house to skim the milk. As she walked down the path in the early sunlight, the dew still sparkled on the grass, and cobwebs, spun on the honeysuckle vines, gleamed with strings of crystal beads. When she opened the door of the spring house the cool air poured out, smelling of fresh butter and milk. Blanche skimmed the cream from the pans of milk, put the cream into small crocks, and poured the milk into large ones. The cream was to be used for making butter and the milk, after it had soured, would be made into cheese or fed to the pigs.

Cream that was to be made into butter was

MILK

first left to sour. The souring could be hastened by adding to the cream some buttermilk left from the last churning. Blanche churned after she had finished washing the breakfast dishes. She came to the spring house with a kettle of boiling water for scalding the churn. After the churn had been scalded with the hot water and thoroughly rinsed with cold water from the spring, she poured the sour cream into it. It was a dasher churn made of red cedar, and had brass hoops around it. The cream crocks had been left overnight on a shelf to let the chill go out of them. If the cream was too cold the butter did not come quickly. While Blanche churned, Peter liked to sit and talk with her. He often helped her with her butter- and cheesemaking.

"While ye're restin' ye might make yerself useful," Blanche would say. "Jest go inside an' git the butter bowl an' paddle an' wash 'em fer me. 'At's a good boy."

"No rest for the weary where you are," Peter said with a grin, as he got the things from the shelf where they were kept.

"This ain't no time o' day to be weary," Blanche said. "In the mornin' with the sun shinin' an' the birds singin' an' the weeds growin', ye can't think 'bout bein' weary."

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"Maybe I've got spring fever," Peter suggested.

"Stop yer foolishness; talkin' 'bout spring fever in dog days."



Peter washed the bowl and paddle. They were both made of wood. The bowl was oval and was one solid piece. Peter took a gourd dipper from the nail where it hung and poured fresh water into the bowl.

"There you are, Blanche," he said. "They're ready for you."

"An' I'm near ready fer 'em," Blanche replied. "Sounds like this butter's beginnin' to come. Jest hand me a dipperful o' cold water."

She poured the water into the churn and began to work the dasher up and down again. The dasher went "chug, chug, chug," as she worked it. The sound became deeper and smoother after the water had been put into the churn and the butter began to collect on top of the milk. In a few minutes she lifted the lid of the churn and looked into it. The butter was floating in a



BLANCHE CHURNED

MILK

yellow mass on top of the milk. Blanche shook the handle of the dasher back and forth and took it out of the churn. She removed the butter with the paddle and put it into the bowl of water. The small particles of butter, floating on top of the milk, she skimmed off with the paddle. She poured the milk into the buttermilk crock.

"Reckon I'll just have a drink o' that milk while it's fresh," Peter said.

"Git yerself a glass," Blanche directed. "Ye don't think ye're goin' to drink buttermilk out o' a gourd dipper, do ye?"

Peter ran to the kitchen to get a glass and brought it back. As he sat drinking the buttermilk, he said,

"I didn't get more than five pints o' milk from Blacky this morning." Blacky was a short-horn cow with a calf.

"Did her calf git loose again last night?"

"Yes, although I shut it up last evenin'. Blacky probably opened the door to the stall. She can open nearly every gate on the place an' let down bars, too."

"Dad blat that cow! She's got too much sense," Blanche declared. "Yer ma's countin' on havin' ice cream to-morrow an' the folks air already invited. How ye s'pose I'm goin' to make

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ice cream with nothin' to make hit out o'? Hit's got to be made o' cream, else yer ma won't like hit."



Blanche was working the butter in the bowl. As the water became milky she poured it off and put fresh water in. She continued to change the water until the milk was all washed out of the butter and the water remained clear. This she poured out and worked the butter with the paddle, pressing it down sidewise to get all the water out of it. She drained off these few drops of water and sprinkled salt over the butter, then worked it again.

"If you need more cream," Peter said, "we could get some from Charles's mother. I could tell him to-night an' she'll save it. She's always glad to sell a little somethin' an' they don't need all their cream."

"She told me the other day her cows had been gettin' ragweed an' wild onions," Blanche said. "That spoils hit."

"I always put stick sulphur in the buckets

MILK

when I milk, if I think our cows got any onion. That takes the taste out," Peter said.

"That's all right fer onions, but I'd like to know what yer goin' to do 'bout ragweed?"

"Nothin'," Peter said. "There's no way to get out the bitter taste. The milk tastes an' so does the butter. . . . It's better to throw it away."

Blanche molded the butter into pound cakes and put them in the spring house. The cakes were round and on the top of each one there was a flower, stamped by the carving on the inside of the mold.

David came around the corner of the house and saw Peter and Blanche at the spring house. "Guess what I saw?" he shouted.

"Where've you been?" Peter inquired.

"Playin' in the branch an' watchin' a crayfish eat a minnow."

"You never saw a crayfish eat a minnow."

"Cross my heart an' hope to die," David affirmed. "I saw a water dog, too."

"I'll bet you didn't see anything 'at looks like work," Peter teased. He picked a daisy from the grass and sat twirling it between his thumb and forefinger.

"You don't seem to be killin' yourself," David retorted.

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"I've been amusin' Blanche while she worked."

"If you'll give me your glass, I can have a good time drinkin' buttermilk," David said.

Peter tipped the glass and drained it. "Here it is," he said, handing it to David.

Blanche washed the churn and the dasher and put them in the sun to dry. The milk pails and pans not in use were standing in a row on a shelf where the sun shone on them and sweet-



ened them. After they had been washed and rinsed they were put there to dry. Peter put them there in the evening and in the morning after the milking had been done and the milk had been strained and put in the spring house.

A catbird lit on a fence post and began to chirrup and warble.

David began to sing, too. "'Listen to the mocking bird, listen to the mocking bird,'" he sang.

The catbird saw a grasshopper whirring in the air and swooped down upon it.

"Got that one," David said, as he watched

MILK

the bird. "Guess I'll go and worry Blanche until she gives me somethin' to eat. Gee, it's half-past ten an' I haven't had anythin' since breakfast."

In a few minutes he came out of the kitchen with a slice of bread spread with blackberry jam.

The next day David offered to freeze the ice cream, much to the surprise of Blanche. He cracked the ice and packed the freezer. When the ice cream was frozen so hard that he could scarcely turn the crank he called Blanche to come and look at it. She took the lid off the freezer and examined the cream.

"Ye kin turn hit a few minutes more," Blanche told him.

"Aw, ain't it done?" David asked. "I been grindin' the old thing all mornin'."

"Not yit," Blanche answered as she went back to the kitchen.

David fastened the crank down. When he had it firmly in place he looked out across the backyard. A Monarch butterfly was flitting over the grass, lighting here and there on a buttercup. David watched it for a few seconds, idly turning the crank of the freezer. He began to speculate on the probability of catching the butterfly. It'll light on a buttercup an' I can catch it under

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my hat, he thought. He forgot about the ice cream and went after the butterfly. The butterfly lit on a buttercup and David approached it stealthily, with his hat in his hand. When he came near, it flew away and David followed. They went around the house, the butterfly leading and David following. In the front yard David came so close that he thought he had it and slammed his hat down over a buttercup. The butterfly was too quick for him and, being startled by this narrow escape, went soaring away over his head into the fruit garden.

"Shucks!" David said disgustedly. "That one got away."



He remembered the ice-cream freezer; maybe Blanche had come to look at it again. He hurried around the house to resume his work.

When he took hold of the handle he found that it would not turn. The dasher had frozen to the sides of the can. He gave it a jerk but it would not budge. Just as he gave it another yank Blanche came out of the kitchen.

"How's hit, Davy?"

MILK

"It's terribly hard; I can't turn any more," David answered.

"It must be done," Blanche said.

"I reckon it is."

Blanche took the lid off and lifted out the dasher. She was just about to scrape the ice cream off when David stopped her.

"Hey! Don't do that. Let me lick it."

"So that's the reason ye been workin' so hard," Blanche laughed as she handed him the dasher.

"Well, don't you think I ought to get some-thin' for my time?" David asked. "I really deserve one o' those little cakes you've been makin', too."

In the winter when there was snow, David and Peter made snow cream. They filled glass tumblers with the snow, put cream and sugar on it, flavored it with a few drops of vanilla, mixed it all together with a spoon and ate it. They considered it a very good substitute for ice cream.

With their meals the boys always drank either milk or buttermilk. On the table, at Mother's right, there was invariably a tray with glasses and a pitcher of milk on it. The boys could not imagine a meal in their house without this tray

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laden with the majolica pitcher and the glasses. Milk was as much a part of their diet as was bread. They found it no hardship to make their Sunday supper of mush and milk or hot bread and milk, with a dish of spiced cherries or quince preserves and a slice of bread and butter for dessert. Milk was used in the making of many things which the boys enjoyed eating, such as puddings, sherbets, custards, pies, and cheese.

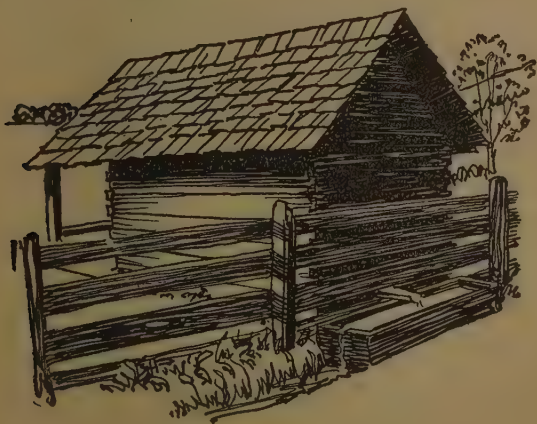
The cheese that Blanche made was either cottage or press cheese (sometimes called "cake" cheese). The cottage cheese was made of sour milk which was warmed to harden the curd and then put into a cheesecloth and hung up to let the whey drip out of the curd. It was eaten when it was fresh, instead of letting it ripen first. The "cake" cheese also was made of milk but in a different way and it was left to ripen before it was used. Blanche made this cheese by first heating the milk until it was lukewarm. Then she put some rennet into it, added the water in which the rennet had been soaked, and stirred the mixture well. The milk was then left to stand until there was a thick curd. Blanche scored the curd with a knife and poured off the whey. After the whey had been thoroughly drained off, the curd was put into a press and the rest

MILK

of the whey was squeezed out. It was left in the press for several hours. When the cheese was taken out of the press it was wrapped in cheese-cloth, rubbed with butter and salt, and put in a cool place to ripen. After it had ripened for two weeks the cheese was ready to be used.

Grandfather Blair liked the cheese that Blanche made, and it always pleased her when he praised her cheesemaking. She often handed a dish of cottage cheese or a piece of "cake" cheese to David or Peter and said,

"Jest run over to yer grandpa 'an give 'im 'at. Hit's somethin' he's mighty fond of."





XII

FOWLS

JOB was the old bronze turkey gobbler. He was monarch of the barnyard, where he strutted and puffed, looking fatter and rounder than an oriental potentate. When Boaz, the peacock, spread his glorious feathers, making a beautiful lunette of gold, green, and blue, with his crested head rising in the center of it, Job was filled with jealous rage. As he puffed and blew, his wattles grew redder and redder. He strutted up and down in front of Boaz, swelled out his feathers, and dragged his wings on the ground. His efforts looked the more absurd because of Boaz's graceful indifference. Boaz did not care for the barnyard and seldom came there.

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He spent most of his time in the orchard and gardens, wandering about with Ruth, the peahen. Job stayed in the barnyard, among his flock of turkey hens. It was his little kingdom and he resented this intruder with the long, drooping tail feathers which could be spread so high and wide. When Boaz was tired of annoying his enemy, he furred his feathers and, dragging his tail behind him like a long, embroidered cloak which trailed on the ground, he left the barnyard to the turkeys, ducks, and geese.

Ruth and Boaz wandered over the place at will. They were permitted to go where it pleased them, in the gardens, the fields, the yard, and even the flower beds. They seemed to appreciate this privilege and never destroyed anything. They ate insects and grain or seeds and found their own food during the summer. In the winter they came to be fed with the turkeys and ducks. They roosted on the top rail of a fence or the branch of a tree and never seemed to have any preference for one particular roosting place.

Before an approaching storm Boaz would give a hoarse scream and, lifting himself on his strong wings, go soaring through the air, screaming as he flew. He never screamed except on the eve of

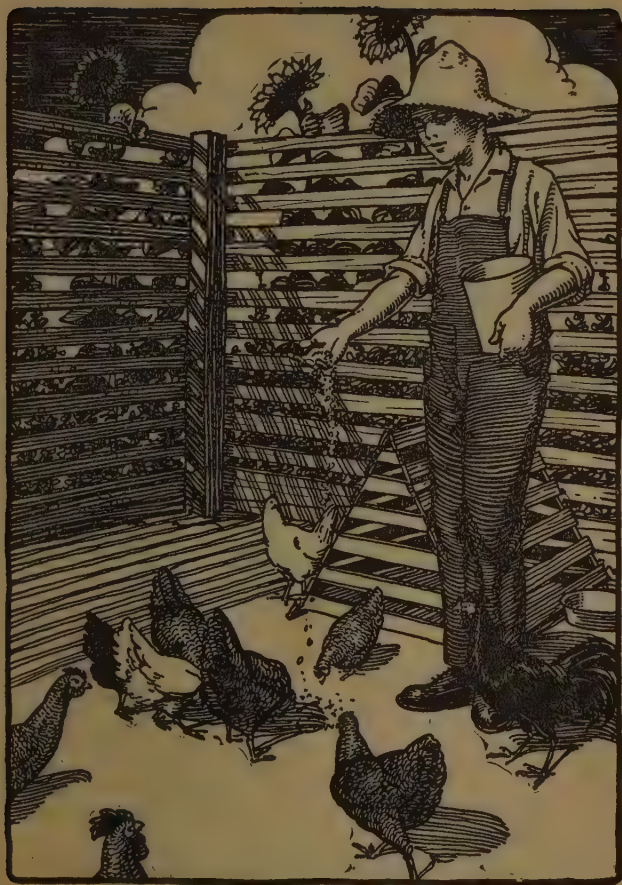
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a storm. Sometimes Ruth and Boaz came to the sitting-room door to make a call. They stood on the porch just outside the door and looked into the room. They never came into the house, and after a few minutes they would go away, seemingly satisfied with that brief visit.

In the late spring Ruth made her nest and laid two eggs in it. The nest was nothing more than a slight indentation in the ground, which served to keep the eggs in place. When the pea-chickens were hatched, they ran about with their mother and were very wild. Ruth did not seem to know how to care for them. She never sheltered them from the weather, and after a rain she would always trail through wet grass and weeds where they would get soaked. They died from exposure and neglect.

There was a continuous war on between David and Job. David teased Job by creeping up behind him when he was strutting, and pulling his tail feathers. When David gave the tail feathers a tug Job lowered his tail and jerked away. Then he turned on David with his wings drooping and the pupils of his eyes dilating and contracting with rage.

"Gobble! Gobble! Gobble!" Job screamed, stretching his neck and sidling around for an



DAVID FED THE CHICKENS

FOWLS

opening to attack. As Job circled, David turned to face him. When Job flew at him, David put out his foot to ward off the blow which Job delivered with the side of a wing. Sometimes Job got too energetic and David had to run to the fence and climb out of danger. David sat on the top of the fence and laughed at Job, which seemed to enrage him all the more.

"Don't get so mad, old boy," David said from his perch, and laughed.

"Gobble-gobble-gobble!" Job yelled as he paced up and down in front of David.



This fight between David and Job went on until Job came under the ax at Thanksgiving time. Perhaps it was too much dinner that made David sick the night after Thanksgiving, but Peter said that it was because of the turkey, and insisted that Job was getting even with David for making his life miserable.

The ducks lived in the barnyard along with the turkeys and geese. In the morning they went down the lane to the creek. They spent the days

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swimming about in the water or sitting on the banks near the creek. In the evening they collected at the foot of the lane by the creek. When they had assembled the old drake would cry, "Q-u-a-c-k, quack, quack, quack," and lead off, up the lane, with all the ducks and young drakes following single file. While Peter was milking he heard their approach and knew that in a few minutes they would appear, making their little duck noises as they prepared to settle down for the night.



In the spring the ducks selected places for their nests, usually along the creek bank where there was an easy ascent from the stream. They made comfortable large nests in the tall grass and lined them with feathers. They laid their pale green-blue eggs in the nests, a good nestful, from twelve to eighteen, and sat on them until they hatched. As soon as the downy little yellow ducklings all hatched, they were led down to the water. They were not taught to swim; they swam instinctively. Sometimes when they came up to the barn with their mother in the

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evening, there would be one duckling less than had started out that morning. Peter knew when he counted them and found one missing that a snake or a water rat had gotten one that day.

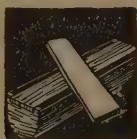
After they had nested, the ducks and geese were plucked. Their feathers were put into bags and kept for making pillows and feather beds.

The turkey hens hid their nests in the tall weeds along fence rows or, if a briar patch was to be found, they liked it even better. There was a patch of blackcap briars growing along the orchard on the side next to the road. It was exactly the kind of place a turkey would prefer for a nest. Just a few stalks and sticks were enough to make the nest. The eggs were large and decidedly pointed at one end, with brown spots all over them. When the turkeys sat, Peter and David tried to locate their nests and watch for their broods when they hatched. It was best to bring them into the barnyard and keep the hen in a coop until the young birds were old enough to scratch for themselves. If they ran around while they were young they got wet, caught cold, and died.

When the first settlers came into the mountains to live they had found vast flocks of wild turkeys in the woods. The wild turkeys were no

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longer to be found in flocks. They had become quite rare but there were still a few in the mountains. They were much leaner than the domesticated birds and their meat was dryer. People who went hunting for wild turkeys usually used a turkey call to attract them. Some people used a call made of the bone from the first joint of the turkey wing. The bone was scraped clean and the ends were cut off and smoothed. The hunters who used this kind of call imitated the turkey's cry by sucking through the hollow bone. When a turkey heard a call it would answer, and in that way the hunter could locate the bird.



There was another kind of turkey call made of cedar, which Uncle Jerry had showed Peter how to construct. It was fashioned out of a piece of red cedar wood, about five inches long and an inch square. One side of the wood was whittled and scraped until it had been rounded. The inside was scraped out until only a shell was left. Across the top, from end to end, a narrow strip was fastened, leaving about an eighth of

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an inch between this and the sides. The sides protruded a little above this piece. To create the sound a flat piece of soapstone or slate about three inches long was scraped across the thin sides of the cedar. The stone was held between the thumb and forefinger as it was drawn across the wood. The sound thus produced was an excellent imitation of the wild turkey's call.

The chickens were not permitted to run at large because they did so much damage if they got into the gardens. They pecked holes in the tomatoes, scratched up young plants and seed beds, ate the lettuce and young cabbage leaves, and made a general nuisance of themselves. They never knew where they belonged and a flower bed was the place that they were sure to choose for scratching. They were easily frightened and always ran from any supposed danger. When a hawk appeared they could see it when it was no



more than a small dark spot in the distance, and would set up an awful disturbance.

There was one old hen which in no way differed

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from the other chickens until she hatched her brood. She then developed into an ill-tempered old shrew. She fought the other hens and pecked at their chicks when they came near her. At feeding time she drove the other chickens away so that she and her family could get most of the feed. When David went into the chickenyard to feed the fowls or gather eggs he sometimes forgot about the old "flogging hen." Then she would fly at his back, pecking at him and pounding him with her wings. Once David had gathered a panful of eggs and was leaving the chickenyard when she attacked him. David was so startled when she flew at him, cackling and flapping, that he dropped the pan he was carrying and broke most of the eggs. He ignored the eggs and started after the hen. She ran to the other end of the yard, screaming and cackling with fear and rage as David pursued her. Round and round the chickenyard they ran, the other chickens and the guineas joining in the excitement with clucks and cackles. At last David grabbed her by the neck. She rolled her angry eyes at him and twisted about to peck him. David slammed her under a coop where she shook herself and clucked angrily.

"Stay there, you old thing!" David cried, "You'll go into a pot if you're not careful."

FOWLS

One morning when David went to feed the chickens he found the remains of a young "fryer" in the henhouse where the birds roosted. Only the bones and feathers, scattered about on the ground, were left to indicate what kind of a thief had been there during the night. He went to the barn and told Peter and Uncle Jerry about it.

"I'm not goin' to have things sneekin' in at night an' killin' the chickens," David declared.

A few nights after this Peter woke up out of a sound sleep. It was very still and bright out-of-doors, but he had a feeling that he had heard something. He lay, unmoving, and listened. Through the open bedroom door he could see the light of a full moon shining on the yard outside; from the meadow came the croaking of frogs, and somewhere in the grass, near the house, a cricket was chirruping. These were not the sounds which had wakened him. He was sure that he had heard something else. He lay very still, straining his ears, and then another sound broke the silence. It was a cackle, ending in a short squawk.

Peter bounced out of bed, slipped his overalls on top of his nightshirt and ran toward the chickenyard. As he crossed the barnyard he

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picked up a piece of broken ax handle which was lying on the ground. This hickory stick made a good club. He hurried to the henhouse and went into the place where the chickens roosted, closing the door behind him as he entered. Inside it was dark save for a diamond-shaped patch of moonlight which slanted through the window onto the ground. The window lacked glass but it had been covered with chicken wire. Peter stood still, waiting for his eyes to become accustomed to the darkness. He could see the white Plymouth Rocks sitting on their roosts with their heads up, looking about nervously. At last he could see more clearly. He peered about to find the cause of the disturbance but saw nothing. When he took a step or two he heard a scratching sound on the ground in the corner. He turned quickly, holding his club ready to strike. Something ran along the wall and Peter struck at it, hitting the wall and missing the animal. The sound of the club thumping against the wall aroused the chickens and set them all clucking and squawking wildly. The animal scrambled up to the window and began to scratch at the wire. Peter could see a furry body and a head with a long snout silhouetted in the moonlight, as the creature clawed the wire in its struggles to get out. He gave it a

FOWLS

blow on the head which stunned it and sent it tumbling to the ground. Peter leaned over and picked it up by its long, smooth, rat-like tail, and held it up in the moonlight. It was a very large fat opossum which had been destroying the young chickens.

"You've had your last chicken dinner," Peter said as he opened the door.

He put the 'possum in a box and nailed a lid on it. The 'possum looked as though it were dead but the next morning it was very much alive and tried to bite Jerry when he pried the lid off the box.

Peter went back to bed. As he wriggled down under the covers David woke up and grumbled:

"What you doin'? You're pushin' me out o' bed!"

"Go to sleep," Peter answered.

In the morning, while they dressed, Peter told David what had happened during the night. They went to the barn to look at the 'possum. When David peered at him through a crack in the box, the 'possum grinned and showed its teeth.

"Oh! but he's mean lookin'," David exclaimed, "an' he's got the sharpest teeth!"

Peter gave the 'possum to Uncle Jerry, who took it home and fed it until Aunt Margaret made roast 'possum with sweet potatoes.

AN AMERICAN FARM

Of all the fowls on the farm the guineas were the noisiest. All day long their "Pot-rack, pot-rack" could be heard. Blanche liked the sound of their continuous cry.

"Always seems kind o' homelike to hear guineas," she said. "They never fergit to keep ye company."





XIII

CORN

ONE morning, after a heavy thunder shower, Peter took Charles to his corn patch. The rain had given the ground a good soaking and the corn had taken in a great deal of moisture through its leaves and roots. In the hot sun the corn could be heard cracking as it grew.

"I ought to have good corn this year," Peter remarked. "We've had plenty o' rain an' sun. That's what corn needs to make it grow. Uncle Jerry says that corn planted in the light o' the moon will all go to fodder; tall an' leafy, with a slender ear."

"I've heard that, too," Charles answered.

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"But if hit's planted in the dark o' the moon the ear'll be thick an' full."

"I reckon it's only a superstition, though. At least, that's what Father says."

"P'raps," agreed Charles, rather doubtfully.

"This corn's goin' to begin to tassel out in a week or two," Peter said. "When pollen starts to form on the tassel, the silks grow out o' the end o' the ear, right through the husk. The wind shakes the pollen off the tassel onto the silk an' makes the grains grow."

"At's why ye have to be so keerful 'bout plantin' sweet corn an' popcorn near field corn. If the wind carries the pollen from the field corn to another patch, the ears in the other patch'll have grains o' field corn on 'em!"

Peter and Charles walked between rows of corn, stepping across young pumpkin vines which had been planted between the corn stalks.

"Cutworms do a heap o' damage to the corn when it's young," Peter observed. "They seem to love to destroy it. Before the cutworms arrive the crows come an' steal the seeds out o' the ground. After the corn begins to ripen the crows are still there to take what they want."

"Ye won't have to worry 'bout squirrels, though," Charles told him. "Down in the country

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where my aunt lives, the woods is full o' squirrels. They come into the cornfields an' carry off bushels an' bushels o' corn an' hide it in their nests."

"The moles don't forget to take their share of it when it's planted."

"Ain't hit funny how so many things like corn?" Charles said.

The leaves of the corn rustled quietly as a slight breeze stirred them. The moisture rose from the ground, bringing an earthy smell with it. Here was corn, the grain which the Indian had given to the white man; corn which supplied the chief element of diet to so many people and animals. Without it the mountain people could not have managed to exist on their poor farms back in the hills. They raised it in the stony little fields on steep slopes where wheat could not grow. They cultivated and gathered it and fed the fodder to their horses and cows, and the grain they fed to the hogs. They butchered the hogs, cured the pork, and ate the meat with pone or hoe cake made from the corn meal.

The Indians had ground their meal by turning it in the hollow end of a gum log set upright. There were some few people back in the mountains who still made their meal this way. The

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Indians made mush with the meal. The whites had found many other ways of using it. They had learned that it could be made into ash cake, pone bread, corn-bread sticks, muffins, hoe-cake or Johnny-cake, griddle cakes baked on a soap-stone griddle, spoon bread, and lye hominy.

Blanche made the lye hominy from dry corn. She put the corn into a bowl and covered it with some weak lye made out of wood ash. The corn was left to soak until the grains swelled and split the hulls. After the grains had swelled, Blanche poured off the lye and soaked the corn in fresh water. She poured this water off and washed the grains again, and rubbed them in a coarse linen towel to remove their hulls. Then the hominy was once more soaked in fresh water to remove all the lye. Blanche fried the hominy in bacon fat and served it with meat as a vegetable, or stewed it in milk, so that it could be eaten with cream and sugar as a breakfast cereal.

When the silks on the ears of sweet corn began to shrivel and turn brown the corn was ready to eat. It had to be gathered when the grains were milky. If it was pulled too soon, the corn was watery and tasteless. If it was taken too late the milk in the corn had turned to starch; its sweetness was gone and the grains were hard and

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tough. Even field corn which was gathered at just the right time was sweet and tender. When Peter or Blanche gathered corn they judged the ear by the silk and the color of the husk. If the silk was still succulent and the husk was a light, clear green the ear was not ripe enough. If the silk was very dry and the husk had become quite dark the corn was, probably, too old and tough. After judging an ear to be good by its outward appearance, they pulled the husk down from the top on one side and looked at the grains to make sure that it was just ripe enough before they broke the ear from the stalk.

Peter had himself selected his seed corn the previous year. It had been taken from plants which had produced large, full ears, growing on long shanks. The seeds were selected only from plants which had borne two ears. When a plant produced two good ears both were taken. The seed corn had been left in the husks and hung in a cool place through the winter, instead of being kept in the crib with the rest of the corn. By this special care which was taken in the selection and storage of the seed it was made to produce more corn than it would otherwise have done.

As Peter and Charles went through the field

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that morning they looked for plants which might produce good seed. The corn was not sufficiently developed for them to be able to determine its quality by the ear. They could judge only by the appearance of the plant and the position of the ears. Charles became greatly interested in the search for probable seed plants. He selected one here, rejected another there, and judged them quickly, taking into consideration all the points which were indicative of the grade of the corn.

"Gee!" he said enthusiastically, "ye got a fine patch o' corn this year."

"Yeh," Peter answered, "it looks pretty promisin'! I hope the smut doesn't get on it."

"Well, if hit does," Charles said, "cut hit off and burn it. Don't let hit go 'til hit bursts open an' begins to fly 'round."

"Father told me he would give me two of the old sow's shoats. She had ten in her litter,"² Peter informed Charles proudly.

"How're the shoats doin'?"³ Charles inquired.

"Fat as butter," Peter answered. "The old sow's meaner'n poison ivy, too. Couldn't hire me to go in her pen. Why, she'd eat you up. Her name's Jezebel. A hen flew into her pen the other day an' Jezebel just killed her an' ate her.



CHARLES CUT A BRANCH FROM A WILLOW

CORN

Chickens are such durned fools. They never know enough to keep out o' trouble."

"Our hogs air mighty tame," Charles said. "When I pass their pen they rub up against the boards an' grunt fer me to scratch their backs. Hogs sure love to have their back scratched 'ith a corn cob. Next to eatin' they seem to like 'at better'n most anything."

The two boys had reached the lower side of the corn patch. They climbed over the fence and walked through the grass in the field, on the other side, until they came to the creek. Daisies, wild carrot, buttercups, and red clover grew in the grass. There was a sweet odor in the field. It was the mingled fragrance of flowers and grass and growing things. Grasshoppers flew out of the way as Charles and Peter walked along the creek bank. A dragon fly darted about and then lit on a swaying rush. For a moment it remained motionless, glistening and iridescent in the sunlight, then darted away.

"There goes a snake feeder," Charles said, watching the dragon fly.

"Why are they called snake feeders?" Peter asked.

"Don't know," Charles answered.

Along the creek bank bushes were growing:

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willows, alders, and elders. The alder blossoms looked like fuzzy white balls. The elder bushes had large flat clusters of white flowers and clusters of green berries which would turn black later in the summer.

Charles cut a branch from a willow and trimmed off the twigs.



At one place the creek bed ran up out of the water and made a little sandy beach. Peter stepped down on the moist sand and put his foot into the water. Charles sat on the bank and whittled off the piece of willow stick he had cut. The piece was about six inches long. He tapped the bark of this small stick with the handle of his knife, turning it in his hand as he tapped it. When he had loosened the bark he pushed the wood out. It left the bark an empty cylinder. Charles cut a piece from the wood and fitted it into one end of the bark, then he cut another piece from the other end of the wood and fitted it into the other end of the bark. He cut a hole in the bark just under one of these plugs and

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sharpened the bark and plug off to make a mouth-piece. He took out the plug and smoothed one side of it by whittling it down flat and replaced it in the bark. He had made a willow whistle from the branch he had cut. He blew into the whistle and brought forth a clear, shrill tone.

Peter, who had been wading about in the creek, turned around when he heard the whistle.

"What're you doin'?" he asked.

"Made a whistle," Charles answered as he blew it again.

"Let me blow it," Peter said.

Charles handed him the whistle which he took and blew.

"Wish I'd thought o' makin' one, too," Peter said.

"I'll give ye 'at one," Charles told him. "I jest made hit 'cause there's nothin' else to do."

"We'll go up to the barn, now. I want to grind the ax. It's as dull as an adze. Will you turn the grindstone for me?"

"Sure," Charles agreed.

They went to the lane and walked up to the barnyard. Near the end of the lane a calf came running wildly toward them with David following. David had painted his face with red streaks of pokeberry juice. He had chicken and turkey

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feathers stuck in his hat and he was carrying a bow and some wooden arrows which he had made.

"Hey!" Peter shouted, "what're you doin'?"

"Playin' Indian," David elucidated. "I'm huntin' buff'loes. One o' my buff'loes is in the barn. He didn't like to play an' he kicked at me when I shot him with an arrow."

"If Father or Jerry sees you chasin' these calves, you'll get buffaloeed," Peter told him.

The calf had overcome its fear of David and was standing, looking at the three boys. David saw it and waved his arms madly.

"Whoop-ee, whoop-ee!" David shouted as he dashed at the calf.

The calf shook its head, raised its tail and went stumbling headlong down the lane. David stood laughing as he watched it.

"Can't you stop pesterin' animals?" Peter asked.

"They don't care," David answered. "They know I'm just playin'."

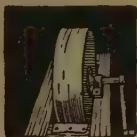
"Maybe they know some games they like better," Peter observed.

"They like my games best," David said confidently. "You just pet an' feed 'em."

Charles and Peter went to the grindstone

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which stood under the shed outside the barn. Charles turned the stone and wet it with water poured from a rusty tin can. Peter held the ax and sharpened it on the wheel.



The corn crib was on the same side of the barn as the shed. The crib was made of slats placed about two inches apart to form the walls. These cracks left space for ventilation when the crib was full of corn. It was almost empty now, but in the fall, when the corn had been gathered and husked, the crib would be full. The fodder would be "taken" first. Later, the corn which had been left standing on the stalks, after the leaves had been stripped off and tied into sheaves, would be gathered. The husks would be torn from the ears, the ears piled on the ground in the field, then hauled to the barn and put into the crib.

Father told Peter about the "huskin' bees" which people had held when he was a boy. When a farmer gave a "huskin' bee" all his neighbors, men and women, came to help him husk his corn.

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They all worked as fast as possible, lightening their task with jokes and stories as they worked. Each person tried to husk more corn than any one else, so the work was soon done. The neighborhood fiddler tuned his fiddle while the "young folks" cleared away the husks and made a space for dancing.

The men and women formed two lines, facing each other, the men on one side of the dance floor and the women on the other. The fiddler struck up a tune and called a figure. It was before the day of round dances. They danced the square dances, going through the figures as they were called. When they danced Weev'ly Wheat or the Virginia Reel they often sang such songs as "Charlie Was a Handsome Man," "Landlord, Fill the Flowing Bowl," and "Old Aunt Susan," while the fiddle squeaked and the fiddler called the figures. Between dances they ate apples and drank cider. They continued to dance until well



into the night. At last the fiddler played "Good-night, Ladies"; everybody took up the tune.

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and sang, diminishing the tempo until the last "Roll along, over the deep blue sea."

They said good-night and went home, disappearing into the darkness. For a few minutes more the sound of voices could be heard as the "folks" went down the road. Far away someone sang, "Good-night, Ladies." Before the song was finished it died away into the distance. In the barn, in the still, dark night, the corn lay piled in golden heaps. Another year's harvest had been gathered.





XIV

COUNTRY

DAVID'S white mice increased in number. They became so numerous that he had lost count of them. They escaped from their original cage, ran all over the barn and built nests everywhere. At last Father discovered a nest of white mice in the corn crib and told David that he would have to get rid of them. Bo and the other cat had done their part in trying to rid the barn of the mice. David set traps for his mice and, as he caught them, he put them into a strong new cage.

"David," Father began one morning at breakfast, looking at him over a plate of steaming gridle cakes which Blanche had just put on the table, "what are you going to do with your mice?"

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David's mouth was full of griddle cakes and maple syrup at the moment and he could not answer. After he had swallowed the mouthful he replied.

"Trade 'em. Some more milk, please, Mother," and handed his glass over to be filled.

"What're you going to trade them for?" Father inquired, smiling. David's passion for trading always amused him.

"I'm goin' to get some bantam chickens; a rooster an' a hen," was David's answer. "Jo Taylor said he'd swop 'ith me for two pairs o' white mice. I told him about their pink eyes."

"There's more than two pairs of mice in the barn. They've got into the wheat, the corn, and the feed. Uncle Jerry found a nest in the corn crib and he says they've made holes in all the feed bags. You'll have to catch all of them."

"All right," David agreed. "Then I'll have more to trade."

There was silence for a moment then David spoke again. "Pass the syrup pitcher, Peter. How can I eat my cakes 'ithout any syrup? Mother, when're we goin' to have buckwheat cakes an' honey? Golly, how I love 'em!"

"Like, David," Mother corrected. "You can't love food."

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"Course I can," David said. "I just love to eat. An' I love food, too."

He finished his breakfast and he and Peter went to the orchard to help Uncle Jerry trim some apple trees. There was honey-dew on the tulip tree in the orchard. They went first to this tree and gathered the leaves from the lower branches which hung near the ground. They looked for leaves with sticky, sweet spots which glistened on them like flakes of mica in the sunlight.

"After we get through helpin' Uncle Jerry we can go an' get some honey locusts over in Shipley's field," David said, licking honey-dew from one of the poplar leaves.

"I can't go," Peter answered. "Charles said he was comin' over this mornin' an' show me how to make a figure-four trap."

"What's a fig're-four trap?" David inquired.

"It's a box propped up on one side, with the trigger made of three pieces of wood. You tie a string to one of the pieces. When you pull that string it springs the trigger and the box falls, or, if you bait the trigger anything that tries to eat the bait will spring it. Charles is going to show me how to cut the notches on the trigger."

COUNTRY

"I'll go alone and bring you an' Charles some o' the locust pods," David said.

They helped Uncle Jerry to finish trimming a few trees, then they left the orchard. Peter met Charles in the barnyard and David went to gather honey locusts.

David could not climb the locust tree because of the sharp thorns on the trunk and branches. He stood on the ground and threw sticks at the seed pods on the tree. These pods were from eight to fourteen inches long and about an inch and a half wide. They were dark brown and looked very much like overgrown bean pods. Along one side of the pod there was a row of seeds and along the other side there was a long tubular space filled with a thick, greenish, syrupy substance. This was the honey. David broke the pods in two and squeezed the honey out of the open ends. He then split the side of the pod and licked out the remaining honey with the tip of his tongue.

While Charles helped Peter make his trap the two boys talked. Charles said that he and his father were going to drive into the country the next day to a farm which belonged to his aunt Emily.

"Dad says, you an' Davy can go, too, if ye want," Charles told Peter.

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"How long 'll it take?" Peter inquired.

"We're goin' to start 'bout five o'clock an' we'll git there early in the afternoon. We'll have to stay down there all night. We can take some victuals 'ith us an' eat on the way. Sort o' camp out."

Peter finished cutting a notch in a piece of the figure-four and then said:

"I'll go an' ask Mother right now if we can go."

Mother consented to let the boys go the next day. Peter ran back to the barnyard and told Charles. When David returned with some of the honey locusts they informed him of their plans for to-morrow.

"'At's just what I wanted to do," David exclaimed, "only I didn't know it."

That afternoon David built a dam in the little branch under the two willows. He drove sticks into the stream bed, wove weeping-willow branches between the sticks and piled mud and stones against the upper side of the dam. When he had finished doing this he lay on the bank in the grass and watched the water pour over the top of his dam. It was mid-afternoon as David lay there, looking at the water and listening to the sound it made as it raced over the dam.

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Gradually a thought began to form in his mind. At first it was not even a vague idea. It was a kind of feeling situated about the center of his anatomy in the region of his stomach. Slowly it reached consciousness and developed into a thought.

The thought took this form, "If I go to the kitchen an' look in the food press I could find something to eat." The thought was mixed with mental pictures and odors which did not form themselves into words. David could see, in his mind's eye, the kitchen, partially darkened, with the shades drawn. In this half-light the food press, with its panels of tinned metal, covered with a pierced design, stood out in shining importance. There was an odor emanating from it which combined the fragrance of cold ham, spiced peaches, green-tomato preserve, sugar cookies, and several other foods which did not distinguish themselves clearly in his imagination.

David rose from the ground and went to the house. He came around the back porch with his hands deep in his pockets and a stalk of millet stuck in his mouth. As he put his foot on the lower step leading up to the porch, Bo, who was sleeping on the floor, with a paw hanging over the edge of the top step, opened one eye to see

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who was there. When he saw David he closed it again. David took the millet out of his mouth and, leaning over, tickled Bo's ear with it. He opened his eyes, shook his head, and gazed reproachfully at David. It was very still and warm on the back porch. A few flies buzzed about the screen door, a mud-dauber lit on a rafter overhead and crawled into a long tube-shaped nest. David brushed the flies off the screen and opened it.



In the kitchen he laid the stalk of millet on the table by the pump. Then he went to the press and opened it; there was a plate of cold biscuits left from dinner, a dish of applesauce, and a bowl with a plate turned over it—probably succotash—on the shelf. He turned the wooden latch and opened the other door. On the bottom shelf were two stoneware jars with lids. David lifted the lid of one of the jars; it sometimes had cookies in it. He put his hand into the jar and found it empty.

"Crumbs," David said disgustedly, licking the ends of his fingers.

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He lifted the lid of the other jar and found it full of beaten biscuits. David put a biscuit into his mouth, holding it between his teeth while he stuffed his pocket, then he closed the press and went to the fruit garden to find Peter.

They talked about the trip down into the country, which they were going to make the following day.

Next morning David and Peter were up before it was light. They dressed and said "Good-bye" to Mother and Father. In the kitchen there was a basket of lunch which Blanche had packed for them. They took the basket and went down the lane. The grass was covered with a heavy white dew. Thin mists lay over the meadows. Around the eaves of the barn the sparrows were twittering and fluttering. While the two boys waited for Charles and his father they gathered some apples from the tree by the gate and put them into their basket. After a few minutes they heard the wagon coming. They stood beside the road and waited until the wagon stopped.

"Git in," Charles said. "Yer up kind o' early this mornin'."

"We sure are," David agreed, climbing into the wagon.

"It's goin' to be a pretty day," Peter observed.

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"Yes, indeed," Charles said, as he climbed over the seat into the back of the wagon.

There was straw on the bottom of the wagon bed. The three boys sat on it and leaned against the tail-board at the back.

They drove up the main street to the top of the hill where the schoolhouse stood. Just before they reached the schoolhouse there was a road leading out of town, to the west. The road went up and down over the rolling hills until, at last, they could see a flat table-land on the top of a distant mountain.

About eleven o'clock they stopped and ate their lunch. The boys built a fire and broiled strips of bacon over it. They put the bacon on forked twigs which they had broken from some near-by bushes. When the bacon was held over the fire the fat dripped off and sent the flames leaping upward. They ate it with cold biscuits and drank water which they got from a spring by the side of the road. The water ran from the spring into a wooden trough; a log which had been hollowed out. The horses were watered there. On the bank just above the spring grew a sweetbriar bush. Peter picked a leaf and crushed it with his fingers. Then he put it to his nose to smell the aromatic fragrance.

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"Reckon we'd better be movin'," Charles's father said as he began to hitch the horses to the wagon. "Hit's a right smart piece to go yit."

"How far is the farm from here?" Peter asked.

"I 'low hit's nigh onto eight or nine miles," was the answer. "These roads ain't none too good an' they git wuss fu'ther on."

The horses were hitched. Charles's father climbed to his seat and the boys got into the back of the wagon again. The road continued to rise and fall over the hills, and became steadily worse. At some places there was bare limestone where the red clay had washed away and left the rock exposed. The wheels slipped on the rock and the wagon slid to the lower side of the road.

Charles's father sat on the spring seat and made complaining sounds when the wheels grated on the stone. They drove very slowly now, for the most part. When there was a good stretch of road for a little way the horses trotted along briskly. They forded a creek. The horses splashed through the water, which came up to the hubs of the wheels. On the far side the road ascended steeply and then wound around the side of a hill through a dense wood. The trees were chiefly gums and hemlocks with an oc-

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casional chestnut, hickory, oak, or dogwood. Under the trees, which shaded the road here, there was a thick undergrowth of laurel bushes, with twisted branches and dark green leaves. Down below, along the stream, which curved around the foot of the hill, there were tall rhododendrons. On the ground, in the rich leaf mould, wood ferns, maidenhair fern, and winter-green grew. There were patches of thick, soft moss with twinberry vines running over them.



On the far side of the wood the road turned and descended a long hill into a valley.

From the top of this hill they could look down and see the valley with a river winding through it between fields of corn and buckwheat and green meadows. The river bank was so low that the stream appeared to have been laid flat between the fields. A few farmhouses with their barns and outhouses could be seen in the rich river bottom. Charles's father lifted his whip and pointed into the distance with the handle.

"Hit's jest around the foot o' that hill," he said,

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indicating a low mountain jutting into the valley at one side.

They drove down into the valley. Larks sang in the meadows and a covey of quail flew up from behind a rail fence. In a cornfield a man and a boy were cutting fodder. They stopped their work to look at the strangers for a moment then resumed it. Sycamores and willows grew along the river bank. As they rounded the foot of the hill they came in sight of Aunt Emily's home.

The house stood a little distance back from the road. There was a driveway from the road to the barnyard. This drive went past the front yard. A boy came riding down the lane on a pony and opened the gate.

"Howdy, Uncle Rufe," the boy said.

Charles's father's name was Rufus.

"Mammy 'lowed ye'd be comin' 'bout now," the boy continued.

"Howdy, son. Where's yer ma?"

"She's in the garden pickin' beans. She'll be up right away when she hears ye've come."

David leaned out of the wagon and stroked the pony's nose.

"What's your pony's name?" David asked.

"Beauty," the boy answered.

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"I'll have to ride her," David announced.

"Ye kin if ye want to," the boy answered.

The wagon stopped in front of the house. Beside the gate leading into the yard there were two rosebushes: one was a single yellow monthly and the other was a moss rose. Under the yellow rosebush there was a patch of striped grass.



By the path leading up to the front door were clumps of dusty miller and old-hen-and-chickens. The path was flagged with flat pieces of limestone. Aunt Emily came out of the garden with her apron full of beans. She was wearing a black slat sunbonnet, a gray-and-white calico dress, and a pair of man's brogans. She hurried over to the wagon, saying as she came:

"Here ye air, an' I'm s'glad to see ye I could jump ashigh as a corn cob."

The strong face with its deep lines, indicative of many years of hard and continuous work, was lit up by a radiant smile and a pair of bright, kindly, understanding eyes.

"Seems like hit's a powerful long time since I

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seed ye. An' ain't Charles growed a heap? Why, he's half a head taller'n he was last year. Who air the two little fellers ye brung along?"

"They're my friends, Peter an' David," Charles explained.

"Well, I'm mighty proud to meet ye." Aunt Emily smiled at the two boys. "Won't you-all come in an' rest a spell? Benny," she said, turning to the owner of the pony, "jest run down to the spring house and fetch up that watermelon."

David and Peter followed Aunt Emily up the path and into the house while Rufus drove to the barn and unhitched the horses. Benjamin brought the melon into the kitchen where Aunt Emily cut and served it. Rufus, who was Aunt Emily's brother, came back to the house and they all went into the dining room to eat the melon. They sat and talked while they ate. Aunt Emily told them of a calf which had been born a few days before and said they should all go down to the barn to see it.

"Hit's the purtiest little feller ye ever *did* see," Aunt Emily told them.

"I want to ride Beauty," David announced. "Benny said I could."

"'At's right," Aunt Emily said. "Have a good time. An', Benny, ye be shore an' show 'em yer

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sheep. There's a heap o' new lambs in the flock. Maybe ye'd like to take a lamb back home 'ith ye, Charles?"

"I sure would," Charles declared. "Dad, kin I have a lamb?"

"If yer Aunt Em gives ye one, sure, ye kin have hit," Rufus answered.

Benjamin took a seed from his plate and, holding it between his thumb and forefinger, sent it flying across the table at Charles. The wet seed struck Charles's cheek and stuck there. He removed it and sent it flying back at Benjamin.



"Don't be doin' that," Rufus said, turning to Charles.

"Ye mustn't be so persnickity, Rufe. Anybody'd think ye're growed up," Aunt Emily said as she shot a seed at him.

Rufus started as the seed struck his nose. His reserve left him. He, too, reached into his plate and fished out a handful of the wet black seeds. Before he could squirt one at her, Aunt Emily

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shot another one in his face. Rufus began to pelt her with seeds. Peter and David each grabbed a handful and joined the fight. In a few seconds Aunt Emily, Rufus, and the four boys were shooting watermelon seeds at each other and scattering them all over the dining room. Aunt Emily jumped up from her seat and went laughing and screaming through the house with her brother pursuing and shooting seeds at her. In the front yard she stopped and faced him.

"Lan' sakes, Rufe, hit's jest like old times, 'ith you cuttin' up like this," Aunt Emily said, still laughing, as she wiped her eyes with her apron. "Stop yer foolin' now, an' look at that calf."

They went to the barn and the boys followed. Benjamin took Beauty out of her stall and David rode her. The boys went to look at the sheep and lambs which were grazing in a field. From this flock Aunt Emily got her wool, which she washed, carded, spun, and wove into blankets and counterpanes.

Benjamin called the sheep who came flocking toward him. The lambs capered and pranced about.

"Which one do ye want?" Benjamin asked Charles.

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"I like the black one" Charles answered. There was only one black lamb among them.

The sheep stood staring, giving off a strong, oily odor from the oil in their wool. Charles caught the black lamb and carried it back to the barn with him. He and Benjamin made a crate for it to stay in while it was in the wagon.

Supper was at six o'clock. After the supper dishes had been washed Aunt Emily and her brother sat at one end of the dining-room table, under a hanging oil lamp, with some papers spread out before them, and talked. Benjamin took the other boys upstairs to a "spare" room, where they were to sleep. There was a large bed in the room with a feather tick on it. Under the feather tick there was a tick filled with corn shucks. The sheets and blankets on the bed had been spun and woven by Aunt Emily. The linen had been bleached in the sun and the wool had been dyed with indigo and pokeberry juice. The three boys climbed into bed and were soon asleep.

The next morning they were up early. Charles put the crate, which held the lamb, into the wagon. Aunt Emily came to the wagon with two of her blankets folded over her arm.

"Here, Rufe," she said as she placed the



AUNT EMILY SPUN THE WOOL AND FLAX

COUNTRY

blankets on the seat, "is somethin' ye kin al'ys find a use fer."

They drove away. Aunt Emily stood by the gate at the end of the lane and waved her apron until they were out of sight.

That evening at supper Peter told Mother and Father all that had happened in the country. David was busy eating. At last he looked at his father and said:

"I've just *got* to have a pony."





GLOSSARY

- Adze. A tool for hewing wood.
Bar soap. Soap molded in cakes or bars.
Branch. A small stream of water.
Card. To comb, unravel.
Chidlins, chitterlings, chittlings. Intestines of pork.
Chink. A crack, crevice.
Chores. Odd jobs.
Covey. A flock of birds.
Cracklings. Fried fat tissue.
Fat meat. Salt pork.
Fetch. Bring.
Flicker. A bird; also called woodpecker, yellow-hammer.
Frow. A tool of iron or steel, used for splitting wood.
Fryer. A young chicken.
Gallivanting. Running about.
Goobers. Peanuts.
Hackle. To comb flax.
Hanging-bird. Oriole.
Hoe-cake. Corn bread.
Hopper. A rectangular receptacle sloping inward at the bottom.

GLOSSARY

- Leach. To draw off, to drain.
Lettuce bird. Goldfinch, wild canary.
Middlings. Fat bacon.
Persnickity. Particular, exacting.
Poke. Bag.
Pone. Small loaf of corn bread.
Pot liquor. Juice from boiled vegetables.
Press. A cupboard.
Pretty. A trinket.
Right smart. A considerable quantity or distance.
Rive. To split.
Sets. Sprouts.
Shoat. A young pig.
Shorts. Bran.
Side meat. Fat pork.
"Skeer." Scare, frighten.
Slat bonnet. Sunbonnet stiffened with strips of wood.
Slat press. Tub made of slats through which something is pressed.
Smut. A disease which attacks corn.
Sorghum. A kind of cane with a sweet sap.
Souise. Head-cheese.
Spoon bread. Baked mush.
Spruced up. To dress up.
Starts. Young plants or sprouts.

GLOSSARY

Strippings. The last milk taken from a cow at each milking.

Swath. The breadth a scythe cuts.

Tick. A kind of mattress.

Tote. Carry.

Tow. Coarse hemp or jute fiber.

Victuals. Food.

Worm rail. A rail fence without a post, erected in zigzags.



